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KRUGER'S SECRET·SERVICE

By

"ONE WHO WAS IN IT"

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ONE WHO WAS IN IT

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KRUGER'S SECRET SERVICE.

CHAPTER I.

In order to make my connection with the Secret Service of the Transvaal perfectly clear, and how it was that I came to hear Doctor Leyds discussing, in cold blood, the proposed murder of Mr Cecil Rhodes, it is necessary that I should go back to the days of the Reform movement in Johannesburg, which was worked in connection with the Jameson Raid. In those days I was engaged in business in Johannesburg, in partnership with a friend. One morning, while strolling down to our place of business, we discovered to our astonishment that the streets were full of armed men. Before this, of course, there had been

rumours of various kinds floating about the gold-reef city, mysterious talk of some movement to be initiated against the corruption and tyranny of the Pretorian oligarchy. But to members of the outside public like ourselves nothing definite had as yet been revealed. One can easily imagine, therefore, our feelings of astonishment and surprise, and even of alarm, when we saw the streets of Johannesburg crowded with men carrying arms: some with rifles, some with carbines, some with fowling-pieces, some men carrying only one weapon, others carrying in their arms half-a-dozen.

The crowd all seemed to be setting in one direction. We followed the drift of the people, and found that its objective was the rooms of the Reform Committee. We did not know, of course, at this time that this was the headquarters of the Reform Committee; we only knew it was the Goldfields Buildings. The Goldfields Buildings are at the corner of Fox Street, and about three hundred yards from the Goldfields Hotel, where the corps to which I ulti-

mately belonged was organized by Major Karri Davis, now so well known in connection with the present South African campaign, and in particular with the relief of Mafeking.

As we approached the Goldfields Buildings, we became aware of a vast crowd assembled in their immediate neighbourhood, and of a man speechifying and gesticulating wildly to the mob. My friend said to me:

"What's up?"

"Haven't the slightest idea," said I; "but we had better cut along and see."

We put our best foot forward, therefore, and were just in time to see wagons draw up full of rifles and cans of dynamite. Just as we reached the outskirts of the mob we heard an orator uttering the following words, words for the authenticity of which I can vouch, and which I shall never forget till my dying day:

"Gentlemen, the cat is out of the bag. The time has now come when as true Englishmen we should strike for justice and liberty."

The people were frantic. Cheers went

up, and his speech was practically drowned with shouts and roars of applause.

Perhaps it is well to pause here, and state the general impression that prevailed among the crowd who listened to the speech delivered in front of the Goldfields Buildings. It is a comparatively easy matter to work upon the fears of a large body of men and women in a lawless state of society, as that of Johannesburg then undoubtedly was. For years Johannesburg had been suffering under the tyranny of the Transvaal Government. When protests were made against this tyranny, they were met by threats on the part of the Boer oligarchy. All the men in Johannesburg, therefore, who had not made a special study of politics, and who were all the readier to fall victims to rumour on that account, were prepared at any moment to believe the worst. Their fears were easily roused, and they were ready to listen to any influential man who was supposed to have a secret and intimate knowledge of affairs, and who was ready to come forward and assure them publicly that the

state of things in Johannesburg was as bad as it possibly could be, and that if they were prepared to defend their lives, their rights, and their liberty, they must strike at once and for ever.

I do not say that this is an accurate sketch of the facts as they actually were. But I do say that this is an accurate sketch of the feelings of ninety-five per cent. of the working population of Johannesburg. If any deception was practised, it was not practised by them. They could not be supposed to know all the secret strings that were being pulled. All they knew was that the Boer Government was corrupt and tyrannical and a constant menace to themselves, that it had commandeered them to serve in its wars without any right whatsoever, and that it might at any moment threaten them with all the penalties possible to a despotic and unscrupulous government. When, therefore, the wealthiest men of Johannesburg came forward and informed the working population that the state of affairs had become so critical that every

independent man in Johannesburg must be prepared at once to defend his rights with his rifle, it is not to be wondered at that a large body of men at once enrolled themselves to defend what they supposed to be the cause of liberty.

At first, however, we could scarcely believe that this first speech referred to a political movement of dangerous significance. It seemed to us to be rather the vapouring of a sentimental radical, making a purely general speech on behalf of what he is pleased to call the rights of humanity. But we were very shortly disabused of this false impression, and that in the most practical fashion. To our surprise, and not less to our horror and disgust, all trade was immediately stopped in Johannesburg. As my friend and myself were purely professional men, depending on our daily exertions for our daily bread, it can easily be imagined what a serious state of matters this was for us.

And here let me make a remark of general significance with regard to the

Reform movement in Johannesburg. It was this stopping of business, this entire cessation of all decent means of earning a livelihood, that caused seventy per cent. of the working and middle class and professional population of Johannesburg to enrol themselves under the aegis of the Reform Committee. In South Africa men live from hand to mouth, even as they do in other places. Therefore, when, owing to some political convulsion, a man's business is brought to a violent and unforeseen termination, he must immediately cast about for some other means of livelihood. But other means of livelihood are as difficult to find in South Africa as they are in other places. Men readily became desperate, and being in that state they are ripe for revolution.

Now, what I want to point out is that owing to this speech by a prominent member of the Reform Committee, trade suddenly and unexpectedly ceased in the whole of Johannesburg. Thousands of men were thrown out of work. Everywhere credit was refused. Unless a man had money in

his pocket he must sleep under the stars and starve: he could neither get food nor lodging. These thousands, then, were perfectly ready to support any movement which promised them for their service a pound a day, the promise ultimately made to them by the Reform Committee. Thus there were two causes conspiring to make the working population of Johannesburg support the designs of the capitalists. In the first place the vast majority of them were British subjects, or men who otherwise detested the corruption and tyranny of the Pretorian oligarchy, and in the second place thousands of them were only too glad to shoulder a rifle on behalf of the Reform Committee, because this was the only means left them of earning their daily bread. Both these reasons applied with particular force to myself. I was an Englishman, and a loyal British subject, and perfectly ready to do anything in my power to advance the cause of my country. I, too, was a business man, depending on my business from day to day, and I suddenly found my business ruined by the political convulsions introduced

by the Reform Committee. I had to do something to earn my support. Of course, it was the first reason that weighed with me much more seriously than the second. Even had I still been in a good position in Johannesburg, I should have been very ready to throw it up in order to take the part which I ultimately did take in Major Karri Davis's Dismounted Australian Corps. But I wish to point out that even had I not been so willing to act a patriotic part, I should still have been forced to do so, because for me in those days in Johannesburg there was absolutely nothing else to do.

Needless to say, all that day in Johannesburg the bars did an enormous trade. Vehicular traffic in the streets had been practically stopped, and some shops started to barricade their windows. But there was a constant coming and going of the population. The streets were blocked with people, some wandering eagerly from point to point searching for news, some standing discussing the latest details and the latest surmises at the street corners. When it was heard,

therefore, that a big meeting was to be held at the Goldfields Hotel that very evening, at which a definite announcement should be made on behalf of the most important men in Johannesburg, there was naturally a determination on the part of every citizen to be present at the meeting, and to learn the secret of these extraordinary proceedings.

In common with the others I determined to be there. When we arrived at the Goldfields Hotel we discovered that the dining-room in which the meeting was to be held could only accommodate some three or four hundred people. The three or four hundred who were admitted comprised some of the foremost men in Johannesburg. The vast numbers who could not find admission to the Goldfields Hotel were addressed in other quarters of the town by various members of the Reform Committee.

One of the speakers at the Goldfields Hotel, I remember, was Mr Paulton, the well-known English actor. As everybody knows, Mr Paulton, as is natural to a member of his profession, has a splendid

dramatic delivery, and he made a rousing speech, calling upon every man in the room to support the flag of England. Mr Paulton's speech, however, brilliant as it was, was rather in the nature of "trimmings" than of a solid and substantial contribution to the evening's debate. The principal speaker was Mr Karri Davis, now so well known as leader of the Irregular Horse in the present South African campaign, and as the first man of the relieving force to ride into Mafeking. In those days Mr Davis was a wood merchant in Johannesburg. He has an intimate knowledge of West Australia, and he was one of the first, if not the first, to introduce into South Africa the Karri Wood, with which most of the streets of London itself are repaired. It is because of this that Mr Davis is known as Karri throughout South Africa. Many have supposed that Karri is really his Christian name, but it is only a nickname, derived from the trade in which he is engaged. Mr Davis had the reputation of being one of the most upright and honour-

able men in Johannesburg. It was this which gave him such a hold upon the general population when he came out on the Reform side, as a man advocating rebellion, and it was this that induced me and so many others to enrol ourselves as members of his corps.

It was on this occasion that I first heard the name of Dr Jameson mentioned in connection with the Reform movement. Major Karri Davis assured us that Dr Jameson, with a large body of Rhodesian and Bechuanaland Police, was riding in to aid his brother Englishmen against the Boer tyranny.

Now, every man in that assembly knew Dr Jameson as a follower of Cecil Rhodes and an ardent Imperialist. It was he who had smashed Lobengula, it was he who had headed the Boers back under a threat of war when they tried to trek into Rhodesia. The natural conclusion, then, of every Englishman present in the dining-room was that the Reform movement in Johannesburg was under the immediate patronage of the Imperial

Government. Remember, I do not say for one moment that Major Karri Davis assured us that we were supported by the Imperial Government; all I say is that it was the natural impression for every Briton to suppose that since Dr Jameson and the Rhodesian Police were coming from British territory to aid the movement, therefore he, as a Briton, could be doing no wrong in supporting it to the best of his ability. That, I am sure, applies to the whole working-class population of Johannesburg of Anglo-Saxon descent who supported the Reform movement. But, for my part, I am bound to confess that, knowing the Boers as I do, I was ready to take a rifle under the Reform Committee whether the movement was under the patronage of the Imperial Government or not.

The immediate result of this speech, so far as I myself was concerned, was that on the following morning I went round to Mr Karri Davis's office in Fox Street and signed on as a member of the Australian Dismounted Corps. The reason of this title

is as follows: Major Karri Davis, being an Australian, or prominently connected with Australia, and knowing there were many Australians on the Rand, called his force the Australian Brigade, partly out of compliment to that country and partly to attract to his standard the many Australians in Johannesburg. As there were not horses for all the members of this Brigade, part of it was constituted the Australian Mounted Brigade and another part the Australian Dismounted Brigade. The Australian Dismounted Brigade was also known as the Improvised Johannesburg Police. When the Reform movement culminated, the whole of the Transvaal Johannesburg Police, with the exception of one officer yet to be mentioned, was forced to evacuate the town. All police protection being withdrawn, therefore, there was great danger, owing to the lawless nature of the community, that many outrages might be offered to life and property. It must be admitted that the Reform Committee, engaged as they were in carrying through arduous work of an entirely different

kind, took the most praiseworthy steps to combat any tendency to civic disorder within the town itself. It was in connection with these steps that Mr Karri Davis's Dismounted Australian Brigade was constituted as the Improvised Johannesburg Police.

Mr Andrew Trimble, who had been borrowed from the Cape Government to re-organize and purify the detective system of the Transvaal, but who had been discharged in spite of the protests of Mr Ewald Essellen, because he was found much too honest for the satellites of President Kruger — Mr Andrew Trimble, I say, being thus discharged, was appointed by the influential men of Johannesburg to act as magistrate in preserving the peace of the locality. It was before him that the Australian Dismounted Corps brought such cases of wrong-doing as came within their cognizance while they were entrusted with the protection of Johannesburg.

It may be of interest to the British public to learn what the emoluments of

the Improvised Police really were. As to uniform, there was little regularity observed, but, as a general rule, our dress consisted of a coat and squash hat, a mackintosh and field boots; our arms being a stick and revolver. The *personnel* of our corps I am afraid was somewhat curious. As I have said, owing to the sudden stoppage of work in Johannesburg, men of all kinds and classes were very willing to turn their hands to anything at which it was possible to earn a decent wage. Many of the out-of-works who thus came forward to enrol under Mr— or as he is subsequently known — Major Karri Davis, were Russian Jews. Now, I hope that I am a man absolutely devoid of race prejudice. I am bound to admit that I have known many decent Jews in my time. At the same time I am equally forced to admit that many of the Russian Jews who were in the Improvised Johannesburg Police were the greatest scoundrels and the greatest skunks unhung. Our corps was thus of a

somewhat curious composition. Men of all kinds of characters and of all kinds of positions were to be found in our ranks; men of every description, from wearers of top hats and frock coats to wearers of corduroys, speculators, stockbrokers, clerks, shopkeepers, masons, carpenters, pedlars, gaol birds, and, among the lower characters of the corps, practically all the riff-raff of the community. At the same time it must be borne in mind that, curious as the Australian Brigade was in its composition, it was universally considered to be the smartest brigade in Johannesburg. It did not compete with the Scotch Brigade, it is true, in martial reputation. This was chiefly because of the fact that many members of the Scotch Brigade were old soldiers of the Queen, wearing on their breasts medals and decorations that they had won in former wars. It was a byword in Johannesburg that the Scotch Brigade if left to themselves would take Pretoria. They wanted to. As a matter of fact, as we shall see later,

on one important occasion their officers had great difficulty in holding them in. But to revert to the dismounted section of the Australian Brigade. I was speaking of the very curious characters to be found in its cosmopolitan ranks. They were the cause of many humorous and laughable incidents during parade and drill. One old fellow, I remember, was a man of sixty years of age, with a long grey beard descending to his breast. He had won a medal in some British campaign or other, which he proudly paraded on every possible occasion. I well remember the first time that his martial reputation became known to the other members of the corps. I had been appointed an honorary officer, and was commissioned to drill into some kind of rough shape or other the somewhat raw material that had presented itself at Major Karri Davis's offices. The moment I began to put this promiscuous crowd through the goose step, I discovered that the grey-bearded gentleman was a veteran soldier. He was

promptly dismissed as a man who had nothing to learn from me; in fact, as a man who could teach me a great deal. I shall never forget the martial strut with which he marched off across the parade ground, well known as Von Brandes Square, Upper Pritchard Street. One very human trait I noticed in the members of the squad under my command. They all, and especially the Russian Jews, displayed the most extraordinary jealousy and envious feeling when the old soldier was dismissed as having no further need for my instructions.

My duties during those days were sufficiently arduous, as can easily be imagined. The fellows with whom I had to deal had no military training whatsoever. It takes many months for the ordinary private soldier to learn the rudiments of his profession. Instead of months, a few hours was all that was allowed me to lick this raw material into shape. From early morning till late at night for several days I was drilling squad after squad of men,

and I think I may say that I drilled them to some purpose, for when they finally marched out as a complete corps they astonished everybody by the regularity and precision and accuracy of their movements.

The pay which was provisionally guaranteed by the Reform Committee was a pound a day. I wish to emphasize this fact. This is very fair pay even for Johannesburg. And be it noted, it was offered to every man who was willing to come forward and shoulder arms, whether he was medically fit or medically unfit. Thus the Reform Committee was killing two birds with one stone. It was offering a very decent wage to preserve the large white population of Johannesburg from starvation and destitution. From this point of view it is deserving of every credit. On the other hand, by offering such generous terms, it was enrolling every European in Johannesburg in the movement which it had at heart. That this was a very politic move by them on general human grounds,

and on particular political grounds, must be admitted by every unbiassed intelligence. Not only did they offer these generous terms to every member of our corps, but they provided us with every possible comfort, with comforts I am perfectly certain that are never accorded to the private British soldier. We were fed like princes at such places as the Grand National Hotel, Frascati's Restaurant, The Goldfields, Central, Height's, Masonic, Lee's, Heath's, and Belgrave Hotels, and, indeed, all the principal hotels, restaurants, and boarding-houses of Johannesburg. In our orderly room we found ourselves well supplied with liquor and cigars. Whether this was due to the private hospitality of Major Karri Davis or to the Reform Committee I do not know, but such is the fact.

I am afraid, however, that many members of our corps were quite unworthy of this generous treatment. On the very first day, on the day of our enrolment, when the Russian Jews (and, indeed, many Englishmen too) found that we were not merely

engaged for a picnic, but, if need be, for very serious and very determined work, they promptly absented themselves from duty. Some of us were detailed for picket duty and street patrols the very first night. I am speaking here with a perfect knowledge of the facts, for on that night I posted the picket at Doornfontein, and personally led the patrol down through Fordsburg and the eastern districts of Johannesburg, and I am sorry to confess that I found that the Russian Jews—and, as I say, many Europeans and Englishmen, who ought to have displayed a more manly spirit—I found that they did not turn up on parade the following morning. They had skedaddled during the night because they were afraid of their skins. So long as they imagined that there was a pound a day to be had they were very willing to pocket it, but the moment they discovered there was some risky work to be done for the sovereign, they promptly hid themselves in bars, skittle-alleys, and viler places of resort.

Some of my readers may imagine that this has very little to do with the Secret Service of the Transvaal, and with the final conspiracy which I shall ultimately unfold, the intention of which was the murder of Mr Cecil Rhodes. But they will discover as they proceed that it was my intimate knowledge of all these facts that ultimately brought me cognizant of the design patronized by Dr Leyds to remove the founder of Rhodesia. And, therefore, it is necessary that I shall detail everything connected with the work of an honorary officer during the Reform movement of Johannesburg. It is in the interest of the British public to learn how arms were distributed during these eventful days. I wish to lay emphasis on the question of arms, because it was my knowledge of how arms were distributed that ultimately led me to bamboozle the Boer Government. They imagined that as I had been mixed up in the business I could give them some information that would be of value to them, and as you will observe in the progress of my narrative, I promptly

set myself to hoodwink them. My actual knowledge of the distribution of arms is connected with what took place in front of the Goldfields Buildings. I saw street trolleys constantly coming up loaded from the Elandsfontein and George Goch and other mines. I and many others made a rush for these wagons on the first occasion when we saw them, and tried to collar guns, but on this first occasion we were unsuccessful in doing so. It was very amusing, and if you care to look at it in that light, a very ridiculous spectacle to see swells and navvies making a simultaneous rush, reaching up across the wheels of the trolleys, and trying to grab arms and ammunition.

I wish to state here that among these men who were foremost in arming themselves against the Transvaal Government there were many Cornishmen. Some journalists in this country have tried to make out that the constituents of Mr Leonard Courtenay behaved in a most cowardly manner at Johannesburg and ran away the moment that

danger was scented in the air. Well, all I can do is to state what I saw, and I saw many Cornishmen, of my individual and personal acquaintance, arming themselves with rifles and revolvers, and falling into line with the most patriotic British subjects then to be found in Johannesburg.

But what, it may be asked, were the duties assigned to the Dismounted Australian Brigade, as opposed to the Mounted? As I have said, there were not horses for all of us, and those who had horses were sent to the outlying mines to co-operate, the moment they were required, with the Jameson Troopers whose arrival was expected every hour. The unmounted portion of our Brigade, to which I personally was attached, was assigned the duty of patrolling the streets of Johannesburg, keeping the Kaffirs in order, etc.,—and the danger of a Kaffir rising, as everybody connected with South Africa will know, was a very serious menace to the peace of the locality. Further, we were commissioned to keep Boer suspects in order, to close the

skittle-alleys, shooting galleries, and other and fouler places of resort. The object of this order of the Reform Committee, like the object of most of their orders, was two-fold. We were ordered to close these places because they were hotbeds of lawlessness, and if allowed to continue might lead to an outbreak against all civilization. In the second place we were ordered to close them because all the skunks, cowards, and lukewarm citizens of Johannesburg were expected to conceal themselves there, rather than take a part in the patriotic rising against Paul Kruger. When they were closed the *habitués* were forced to betake themselves to the streets, and, being in the streets, were more easily got at, and more easily enrolled as supporters of the revolution taking place.

It may interest English readers to know what a skittle-alley in Johannesburg actually is. A skittle-alley in England we all know. It is very often a pitch on beautifully kept lawn outside a quaint old English tavern. Men of all classes of society, from peasants

to undergraduates at the universities and country gentlemen, meet there to have a pleasant game, the sole prize in which is beer, or some other mild refreshment for the company. But a skittle-alley in Johannesburg is a very different thing. To procure admission you buy a ticket for which you pay sixpence, a shilling, or half-a-crown, as the case may be. Ten, twelve, sixteen, or twenty enter for the competition, according to the number of the competitors present. There are generally three prizes, but, be it noted, these three prizes do not represent the total value of the stakes. By no manner of means. A large balance is always reserved for the proprietor. As a matter of fact, while these places go under the apparently innocent name of skittle-alley, they are really gambling-hells. The shooting galleries are absolutely similar. In a shooting gallery, skill plays a very small part in the game. They resemble more than anything else a game of *petits chevaux* played at Ostend, Boulogne, Spa, etc. From this description it will be seen

that the *habitués* of these places are generally not men of a very high type of character. As hotbeds of lawlessness, therefore, and as places which, if allowed to remain open, would be likely to keep back valuable raw material for a revolution, we were ordered to patrol the streets and close them. We did this by the right of a martial law proclaimed by ourselves. Those who disobeyed this law and refused to follow our instructions were immediately run by us in front of Mr Andrew Trimble. I well remember one very comical incident. A filthy old Russian Jew, who kept one of these skittle-alleys, created a terrible disturbance when I ordered him to close his booth. He asked by what right I interfered with his business. I replied that it was in accordance with the terms of the martial law proclaimed by the Reform Committee. He immediately informed me he owed allegiance to the Transvaal Government, that he had nothing to do with the British Government, that the Transvaal belonged to the Boers and would never belong to any

other authority. During the whole course of my sojourn in South Africa I never met a man who displayed such a violent hatred to England as this Russian Jew. It is no exaggeration but plain statement of fact to say that he foamed at the mouth. However, his protests were of no avail. He was dispossessed of his revolver, taken to the charge office, that is to say to Karri Davis's office, and his place was immediately closed. But there was no malignancy shown even to our most inveterate enemies. He was not detained at the charge office, but allowed to go on condition that he should create no further disturbance.

The animosity of this old Russian Jew is very illustrative of the divided state of opinion that existed in the Transvaal several years before the culmination of the actual conspiracy. I remember very well that in all the theatres and public places of amusement throughout the Transvaal, not merely in Johannesburg or Pretoria, mind you, but in every locality where there was a place of amusement of general resort, it was impossible

to play either the Volksleid or the English National Anthem, because of the violent antipathies which these melodies excited in one section or other of the audience present. In Johannesburg there was an attempt to effect a compromise by playing first the Volksleid and next the National Anthem, but this was absolutely unsuccessful. If the Volksleid was played the anti-Boer element of the audience immediately created such a disturbance that the orchestra was drowned; if, on the other hand, "God Save the Queen" was played, the Boers howled themselves hoarse in derision of Her Majesty. That being the state of affairs, it did not excite wonder that a Russian Jew, who had no doubt found that he could make a very good livelihood under the Boer Government, should display such a violent antipathy to Englishmen and all their ways.

When one tries to recall the condition of Johannesburg in the days of waiting, as one may call them, it all seems to one like a nightmare or a hideous dream. The

two dominant notes of public feeling in those days were expectation and fear. It is very curious to watch a mob under the alternation of feeling produced by hope and swiftly succeeding terror. Man seems to be reduced to his primitive elements under conditions such as those. He loses the firm balance, the cautious consideration of chances, the disinclination to believe absurd information, which characterized him in ordinary and stable communities. Every vague rumour brought to Johannesburg at once found thousands of men to listen to it eagerly. At one moment we heard that a considerable body of British were advancing to our relief, and immediately a vague stir was visible throughout the promiscuous and cosmopolitan crowd. Men shook hands and stood one another drinks. All was well. Jameson was riding in. The British Government was going to interfere. Kruger would soon be in exile. In fact, some hopeful spirits were already declaring that he had scuttled to Delagoa Bay. The next moment a somewhat different rumour would be spread

abroad among the populace. A fiasco of some kind had occurred. And to an observer of human nature like myself, not at all scientific, but merely interested in every manifestation of my fellow-men, it was exceedingly curious to witness the sudden drop from the sublimity of hope to the absolute depth of despair displayed by my fellow conspirators. Men who half-an-hour before had been slapping each other on the back, toasting each other in bad whisky or in good champagne, the next moment would be skulking in corners, quivering about the eyes, growing pale in the centre of the cheeks, and all because it was rumoured that the Kruger gang were advancing on Johannesburg with their guns, and determined to blow the place about our ears. These alternations of foolish hope and no less foolish despair succeeded each other so swiftly that when one looks back upon them now it is very difficult to write of them as actual and tangible realities. Real as they were at the moment, they seem no more palpable now, no more realizable, than

shadows floating rapidly across the surface of water. But I wish to emphasize the fact from my own feeling, that at the time, and under the conditions I have described, these emotions, whether of hope or despair, were of absolute and of vital importance to the "man in the street" of Johannesburg.

All this, no doubt, seems to be a very brief matter while you read it. It only takes you a few moments to read about the long agony of expectation which rent the people of Johannesburg. But for one apparently endless week, by night and day, these feelings were ours.

A friend of mine, whose name I may not give, was commissioned to make the reflector and to watch the search-light which should warn the town of the approach of the enemy from the direction of Pretoria. One never went to sleep without the feeling that at any moment one's sleep might be broken by the quick rattle of rifles and artillery. Every morning when we awoke the first question that was asked was: "What has happened during the night?" We were all early

risers in those days. One's first idea was to rush into the street and discover the news that had come during the night. And the moment one appeared in the street one became conscious that the faces of the passers-by were still more haggard, still more anxious, and still more despairing. One saw that more and more shops had been barricaded, and that things were getting nearer and nearer a crisis, but whether for good or evil no man was able to determine. And so from day to day the nerve-wearing, slow-dragging play went on.

One effect of this constant postponement, not merely of good news, but of anything actual, of anything to go upon, was that it began to spread despair, and what one may call ineffectualness among the populace. Personally, my feeling was that I was like a man swimming in a strange sea in a mist. Swimming bravely enough for the time being, it is true, but with a terrible fear beginning to creep into my heart that there was no shore, whether friendly or hostile, to

which I might make my way. It is a difficult state of feeling to convey to the people at home, who have never been mixed up in an affair of this sort, but I assure them, and I know that everybody who was a member of or a servant of the Reform Committee will also assure them, that this feeling of uncertainty was much the most terrible experience that we had to pass through in the autumn of 1895.

So we dragged on from day to day, sometimes fed by false hopes, and sometimes depressed by groundless despairs, until that awful day, the 2nd of January.

In my capacity as a member of the Australian Brigade, prepared for any eventualities, no matter how desperate, that might occur in Johannesburg and its neighbourhood, I was grouped with some of my men in the immediate neighbourhood of the Barnato Buildings, in which some members of the Reform Committee then were. The Barnato Buildings were especially adapted to the purpose to which they were shortly to be put, because they

are furnished with a lofty and commanding balcony, a feature that is wanting in the Goldfields Buildings. I well remember the occasion. The mob around me was ripe for anything. Men's nerves had been so exasperated by the long delay and by the uncertainty, that they were ready for any desperate enterprise. We had been hourly expecting Jameson to come. It was as much as those in authority, officers like myself, and others, could do to prevent the rank and file from marching out to his assistance. Every now and again despatch riders, both cyclists and horsemen, had been riding in with mysterious missives to the Reform Committee. As each of these drew near the excitement in the mob increased a thousandfold. Every man was conscious that fighting was going on somewhere in the neighbourhood. Every man was conscious that men of his own blood were waging battle on the soil of the Transvaal, that Englishmen might enjoy in the Transvaal the rights of freemen. The mob was frantic to assist. No speech of man can convey the

perfect frenzy of excitement that manifested itself every time a despatch rider drew near. Shouts were constantly raised that we should march, not to the rescue, because at that time we did not know that a rescue was needed, but to the assistance of our fellow-countryman. But, unfortunately, there was no one to lead. Again and again we cast our eyes in the direction of the Goldfields Buildings — the headquarters of the Reform Committee. They knew the secrets: they were receiving the despatches: but we did not know. A horrible suspicion of deception arose among the crowd. Something was being kept from us. Even if it be good news that is kept from a man he becomes conscious of the feeling of irritation that he should be considered unworthy of receiving the intelligence which is common property among his fellow-men. How much more is that the case when a fear becomes common that the news is not good news, but terrible news, news of an imminent disaster, which, if it is to be prevented at all, should be known at once.

Shouts were raised: "Let us go out." "Where's Jameson?" "Why do you keep us in the dark?" "Why don't we fight?" "Sir Drummond Dunbar." "Why doesn't Phillips tell us?" "Where's Leonard?" In fact, there were all the elements of as ugly a rush upon the buildings of the Reform Committee as it is possible for the mind of man to conceive. And no doubt it was this dangerous excitement among the mob that ultimately determined the Reform Committee to communicate to us on that awful night the news of what had occurred.

It was a dark, fine night, just after the New Year, warm and still, as such nights are apt to be at that meridian. The mob heaved and swayed this way and that, and it was a curious sight to witness the dark, dense, excited mass of humanity, in the alternate bright light and dark shade cast by the gas lamps and the electric lights. Momentarily, I turned my eyes from the balcony of the Barnato Buildings. Suddenly I was perfectly conscious of a strange thrill running through the dense

body of men by which I was surrounded. Although my eyes were not turned to the balcony in front, I was perfectly conscious, by the contagious thrill of the mob, that something momentous had occurred. I was so tightly wedged in the crowd that for a moment I could not turn my eyes to the balcony, and yet that subtle sympathy, which is characteristic of the psychology of a mob, communicated itself at once to me. I knew without having anything definite to go upon that we had reached the crisis of our fortunes. A low growl, a continuous under-murmur, gradually swelling to a roar, was heard among the mob. At last by a violent effort I wrenched myself round, and then I knew that the moment of revelation had come.

A window had been opened behind the balcony, and there, in the brilliant light, streaming forth from the centre room, stood a group of the best known men in Johannesburg. Those to right and left of the central figure were not clearly distinguished in the darkness. Even from where I stood, they seemed to me to be agitated by some subtle

and insidious fear. There was an air of shrinking about them, an air of withdrawal, of terror as to what the moment might bring forth. And a moment after, when I heard the intelligence which the man in the centre was commissioned to announce, I did not wonder at their terror and their shrinking. The marvel to me is that they dared to appear on that balcony at all.

The light from the central window streamed far out across the mob. So brilliant was the light within the room that, shooting forth into the darkness, it battled successfully even with the glare of the electric lights and the more fitful flutter of the gas lamps. To my mind this sudden outburst seemed symbolic of the revelation that was about to come. We had all been in fitful shadow hitherto, but here at last was illumination. It might mean the illumination of an awful catastrophe, it might mean an outburst of brilliant hope, but illumination it certainly was. Although the light was streaming from behind the central figure on the balcony we were able to distinguish his features.

They were those of Lionel Phillips, one of the best known men in South Africa, and one of the moving spirits of the Reform conspiracy. We knew that if any man could enlighten us he could, and it was strange what a marvellous silence immediately fell upon the mob. Before the thunder bursts, everybody knows that there is often a wonderful pause and silence in the natural world. It seems as if nature was listening for the dread message about to come; and so upon that night with the mob of Johannesburg. The mob that had been growling and howling, not merely for hours but for a whole day and a whole night, in expectation of news, was suddenly stilled as if by magic. There was no need to call order. There was not even a sound of breathing. For every man knew that the words which should shortly fall from Phillips' lips were of vital and awful moment; that our fate should be decided by what he was about to utter. And these were the words he spoke: they have burnt themselves in upon my memory: "Gentlemen, the cat is out of the bag. There is no

use in deceiving you any longer. Jameson has been beaten and taken prisoner, and he is now upon his way to Pretoria."

Again I was conscious of a quiver running through the mob. For a moment that awful silence still continued, but it was different in quality from the silence that had prevailed before Phillips' speech. That had been the silence of expectation: this was the silence of despair. It seemed as if every man was stricken down by some awful intelligence which he could not immediately realize, and then at once an awful yell broke from the mob. That cry was different in quality from any other sound I have ever heard in my mortal career. It was liker the cry of a wild beast than any sound ever uttered by humanity, and the reason was that on that occasion humanity was reduced to its primitive, animal, and, if you like, bestial elements. We had been tricked. We had been deceived. We had been baulked, not of our prey, but of our opportunity to render assistance to our fellow-countryman who, as we supposed, had been advancing to our

relief. It only needed a turn of the mob to tear the Reform Committee into little bits. Yells, shrieks, shouts, curses, tears, vague inarticulate cries of desperation and revenge were all around me. The mob swayed this way and that. Now, there would be a terrible rush against the doors of the Barnato Buildings, but the moment after, the window opening to the balcony of the Barnato Buildings was closed, and all the lights in the place were extinguished. But at the Goldfields Buildings, sixty yards distant, lights were still burning, and we knew that the majority of the Reform Committee were still there in session. Immediately there was a rush towards the doors of the Goldfields Buildings. When I say that there was a rush, it must not be supposed that a section of the crowd left the Barnato Buildings and covered a clear space in between, in order to make a determined onslaught upon the Goldfields Buildings opposite. The fact of the matter is that the whole space between the Barnato Buildings and the Goldfields Buildings was filled with an excited mob, and the rushes

that I mention were like the surges hither and thither of a tempestuous and angry sea. Cries of "cowards," "traitors," "criminals" rent the air. As a matter of fact, it is a good thing for the members of the Reform Committee that no commanding desperado was present in the crowd that night. For my own part, I do not say they were traitors or even cowards. They have proved since, many of them, on many a stricken field of battle, that they were the bravest of the brave. But, on that occasion, they had certainly bungled a conspiracy; and if there had been a man in the crowd desperate enough and criminal enough to excite to slaughter, the lives of the committee would not have been worth a moment's purchase. That they were aware of this is proved by the quantity of alcohol which they consumed to keep up their courage. I remember that at the back of these Goldfields Buildings in Fox Street, the ground was littered for days after the rising in Johannesburg with heaps of champagne and whisky bottles, the contents of which had been consumed

during the few days when the conspiracy was at its height. Here and there, among the débris of whisky and champagne bottles, were to be seen empty cases, in which arms for the movement had been smuggled into Johannesburg. I have detailed all these particulars, because, as you will see, they are very important in order to make you understand the manner in which I was ultimately able to hoodwink Dr Leyds, Mr Van der Merwe, otherwise known as 'Schelm Daavid,'[1] and other officials of the Transvaal.

Personally, I remained under arms for two or three days longer. My final recollection of the Johannesburg rising is concerned with the following fact which remains very vividly in my memory. One afternoon, about a week later, I happened to be outside the Johannesburg Club, when a victoria drove up to the entrance at a rattling pace. Inside there was seated Mr De Korte, newly constituted Lieutenant for the occasion.

[1] 'Schelm' means 'dirty fellow.' It is used by Dirck Hatteraik in *Guy Mannering*.

He was dressed, I remember, in a splendid dark uniform with silver facings, and he had in his possession a warrant for the arrest of some of the chief Johannesburg conspirators. In appearance De Korte reminds me of Dr Leyds. He has the same dark sinister look, and large dark eyes, cunning aquiline features, dark military moustache, the waxed ends of which point to his eyeballs, and a black goatee, characteristic of so many Hollanders in the Transvaal service. On that occasion, too, I am sure that for a word the crowd around the club bars would have made very short work indeed of the newly-constituted Lieutenant De Korte!

With one other revelation I will end this preliminary chapter. It is incumbent upon me to present my testimony that the Reform Committee dealt most loyally and generously with every man who took arms to serve them within Johannesburg itself. Some of the cowards who deserted may have spread false reports about them in this connection. I wish to explain the actual

facts, and I think when they are presented before the British public that they will understand perfectly well why it was that certain men who took up arms nevertheless failed to receive any money. I, myself, having served nine days, received nine pounds for my services. I was there at the pay office when the pay was given out, and every member of the corps who served his full nine days will be able to bear testimony to the truth of what I say. I saw them sign their names in full acquittal, and the pay sheets are now in the possession, no doubt, of some member or other of the Reform Committee. But here is where the revelation comes in. The moment the Russian Jews, the mean whites—and, as I have said before, I am ashamed to say that some Englishmen were among the number—the moment these discovered that all danger was now over, and that money was to be forthcoming for every man who had appeared on parade, they immediately presented themselves along with the rest of the corps and demanded payment for

their services. They were disappointed, however, as they had a very good right to be. No man was awarded payment unless he had remained faithful to his cause during the whole time of the Johannesburg rising. It is easy to understand, therefore, how some of these fellows, who had been justly disappointed, afterwards spread abroad the report that they had been unfairly treated by the Reform Committee. I have no reason to speak well or to think well of the capitalists of Johannesburg, but that they behaved in this matter like men of honour is indisputable.

In the next chapter I will show how it was that my intimate connection with the rank and file in the movement that was concomitant with the Jameson Raid, led to my subsequent intimate connection with the Secret Service of the Transvaal.

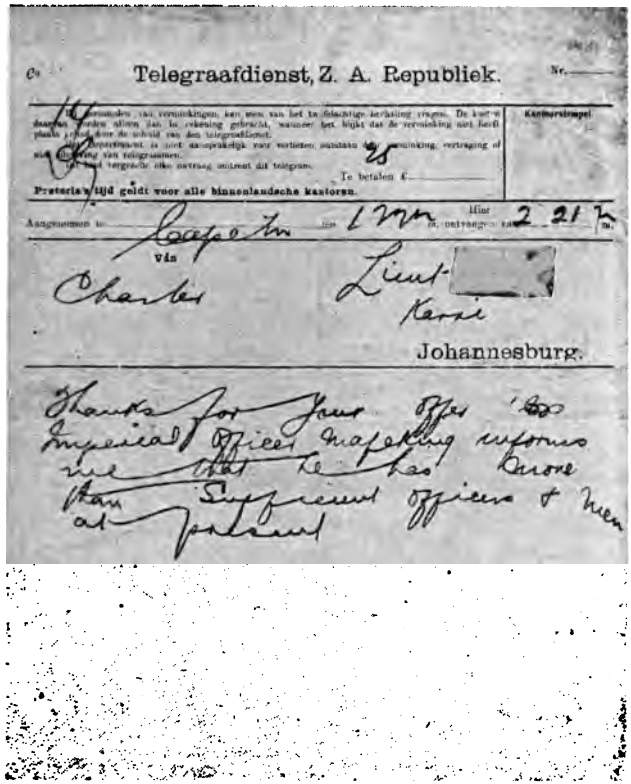
CHAPTER II.

It can easily be understood that immediately after the rising in Johannesburg trade was exceedingly slack for a considerable time. Personally, I, myself, had very little to do. Owing to the Raid, a speculation in which I was engaged fell through and came to nothing. Having a pretty extensive acquaintance with Johannesburg society of all kinds, I knew scores, in fact I may say hundreds, of young fellows in a very similar condition. That being so, when the Matabele Rising took place I immediately wired to the authorities of the Chartered Company from the office of Major Karri Davis, offering, not only my own services, but offering also to arm and equip a force of one hundred men for the suppression of the Kaffir rising. Unluckily, I was too late

in volunteering, and received the following telegram from the Secretary of the Chartered Company at Cape Town. The telegram, you will perceive, is addressed to Lieutenant , care of Major Karri Davis:

"Thanks for your offer Imperial Officer Mafeking informs me that he has more than sufficient officers and men at present."

As there was no field of energy opened up for me in this direction, I was thrown once more upon my own resources to make a living in Johannesburg. And as, according to the adage, "misfortunes never come singly," I shortly afterwards lost the small balance of my property in the famous Johannesburg explosion. I had invested this money in two stores, or "winkels" as the Dutch call them, and these were practically wiped off the face of the earth. I had some curious experiences on the actual day of the explosion itself. I was coming down Commissioner Street towards the Empire Theatre, when the awful report shook the town to its foundations. Every window in the vicinity went with a



Telegraafdienst, Z. A. Republiek.

Nr.

Kantoorstempel

Preteria-tijd geldt voor alle binnenlandsche kantoren.

Aangenomen te Laagte Inn om 12 Uur Uur ontvangen te 2 21 m.

Via

Charles

Lieut-

Kerr

Johannesburg.

Thanks for your Offer to Imperial Officer Inspecting informs me that he has Drove Team Supplement Officers & Men at Johannesburg

[*To face p.* 54.

clatter of broken glass. The roof of the Empire Theatre just before me was lifted bodily from its position on the walls, and, though not flung off upon the ground, was twisted round so that, when I went inside, I could see the daylight appearing through many gaps and corners between the edge of the wall and the edge of the roof. As can well be imagined, the bar of the Empire Theatre is one of the best stocked bars in South Africa. The result of the explosion, of course, was that every bottle, glass, and jar in the place was smashed to atoms, and when I forced my way in through the dust of the room there was a perfect sea of brandy, whisky, wines, and liqueurs lying on the ground. Perhaps it would be more correct to call it a river, because down the steps of the theatre a variegated flood of choice blends and vintages was pouring into the street.

Within half-an-hour of the explosion I had reached the scene of the disaster. It was at a new township, or camp rather, in the vicinity of Fordsburg. Most of the

people who lived in this locality were Kaffirs, Indians, or low-class Dutchmen, of whom there is a number in South Africa, corresponding to the mean whites of America, about which the people at home know very little indeed. The mixture of Hindoo, Kaffir, and mean white made this new township one of the most iniquitous, insanitary, and generally offensive quarters of Johannesburg. The houses in the locality were not houses strictly speaking, but tin shanties rather, and needless to say they were all levelled with the ground, the great white sheets of zinc being whirled in some cases half-a-mile away like leaves in a November storm. I saw some curious sights amid the débris of the scene of the disaster. On our way we passed a black woman who was lying on the ground at the point of death. Both her legs had been blown off. By her side two brown, little, semi-naked pickaninnies were sobbing bitterly. One curious find which we made among the dust was a number of horses' tails, just like brushes or plumes, actually

blown out by the roots from the draught animals employed in the neighbourhood of Fordsburg. The rails of the siding in which were the trucks of dynamite, the cause of the explosion, were twisted into all kinds of fantastic shapes, as one might twist the soft white wire about the neck of a lemonade bottle. They were all curled and frizzled up. I know of no other words to describe them. I mention this explosion particularly as an organic part of my narrative, because it explains the very low water to which I was reduced by the successive misfortunes that had overtaken me ever since the beginning of the Johannesburg conspiracy. My business was practically stopped entirely by the rising in Johannesburg, and, on the heels of that, the remnant of my small property was swept away by the explosion. I was becoming ripe now, as you can easily imagine, for any desperate adventure. And like many another young fool in similar circumstances, I immediately added to my other troubles by promptly falling in love.

The father of the girl to whom I was attached was one of the ablest mechanicians in the Transvaal. He was a magnificent scientist, with a splendid knowledge, in particular, of electricity and engineering. He was not a man at that time of any great personal wealth, and like everybody else in the Transvaal he was very willing to direct his great abilities to some project which would bring him in an adequate income. Now, it is a characteristic of the Boer mind, and of its condition of suspicion and resentment towards England and the English, that it is willing to welcome the most impossible plans for weird engines and instruments of war, that may possibly blast the hated rooineck off the face of the earth. It is easy to understand how the Boer, suspicious though he naturally is, is thus credulous in the matter of scientific armaments. In an incredibly short time he has seen science transform the face of his country, and, being thoroughly ignorant and slow-minded himself, he is willing to credit it with perfectly uncanny powers.

At the same time his constant suspicion of England whets his appetite for news of some dreaded instrument of modern warfare which he may use against the English. He believes the most cock and bull stories about the possibilities of military science, because his hate makes him willing to believe them. He is a ready prey, therefore, for any inventor who comes to him with a story of a new gun or a new explosive.

Knowing this characteristic of the Boers, my friend had for some time turned his attention to the question of Maxims and other guns of the modern quick-firing kind. He imagined that he saw his way to the invention of a weapon which should be a great improvement on the Maxim-Nordenfeldt. I may say here at once that my friend was disappointed in his expectations so far as the gun itself was concerned. But he invented in connection with the gun a new and perfected form of tripod which commended itself so much to the Boer military authorities that they did all they could to get possession of it. However, they failed;

and the same invention is now awaiting sale.

Being enamoured of the inventor's daughter, I naturally took a considerable interest in the inventor's gun. I constantly found him discussing his plans, and was quite familiar with all his hopes and expectations. I may say at once that this gentleman was in every way a very good friend of mine and is still. He has helped me with money when he was flush of cash, and I have returned the good offices when our positions were reversed.

About this time I received a rather important appointment under a large retail and wholesale business in the gold-reef city. In the interests of this business I was commissioned to travel through most of the large towns and centres of South Africa. That is an important fact and bears on the elucidation of my later career. During my travels in the service of this firm, I became acquainted with every town and district of South Africa, and gained a peculiar and extensive knowledge of the character and circumstances of very many of the leading

men in Cape Colony, Natal, the Free State, and the Transvaal. It was because Kruger's officials were well aware of this fact, and knew also that I had been engaged in the Johannesburg conspiracy, that they came forward with large sums and induced me to enter their Secret Service. They imagined a man that had been hand and glove with the Reform business, and who had an intimate knowledge derived from a business experience of large numbers both of their friends and enemies—they imagined that this man, I say, would, if faithful to them, prove a very valuable tool. But, as you shall see, they reckoned without their host.

In the course of my business travels through South Africa I was visiting Kroonstad, and I happened to be there, I remember, on the very day that the "Drummond Castle" went down, off Ushant, on the coast of France. I was sitting in the Kroonstad Club when a prominent Scotch "winkel" proprietor of Kroonstad came in and said: "The 'Drummond Castle' has gone down with all hands." When I use

the word 'club' in connection with Kroonstad, you must not imagine that I refer to a palatial building such as many of those that may be seen in the principal streets of London. The Kroonstad Club, although the resort of the chief men of the place, consists of nothing more than a smoking-room, billiard-room, reading-room, and bar, built in the shape of a low, one-storeyed bungalow, with the inevitable South African stoep in front.

It was a bitterly cold night, I remember, when the Scot came in with a white face and stammered out the news that the 'Drummond Castle' had gone to the bottom. I shall never forget the rush of cold air that swept past him in the door as he uttered the appalling words. The intelligence alone was enough to freeze us, but this blast, sweeping in from the cold darkness without, seemed to be symbolical; it seemed to amplify and intensify the intelligence he brought. I remember shivering violently, and to this day I cannot say whether it was at the terrible news or at

the Arctic inrush of the air. Each, as I say, seemed to intensify the other.

I was the more shocked and horrified at the news of this disaster, because two very dear friends of mine, whom I had seen shortly before they left South Africa, had been on board. Indeed, they had pressed me to accompany them home, and they had very nearly persuaded me into taking my ticket along with them. These friends of mine had travelled together in practically every corner of the globe. They were enthusiastic curio-hunters, and they had finally succeeded in amassing a considerable fortune and a valuable collection of curios, savage arms, etc. When they left South Africa their intention was to join their wives in England, retire with the money which they then possessed, and enjoy themselves for the remainder of their days. These were the hopes which they laughingly expressed to me before they set sail from Cape Town. And now, all of a sudden, sitting in the quiet club at Kroonstad, I received the stunning news that all these bright hopes

had gone down in the stormy waters off Ushant.

I was rendered so heart-sick by this intelligence that I immediately determined to visit my friends in Johannesburg. I wanted to see my friend the inventor, and, above all, I wanted to see his daughter. I had been travelling for a considerable time away from Johannesburg. I had had a good deal of worry and bother, and now the news of the 'Drummond' disaster came to put the finishing touch to my feelings of loneliness and disgust with things in general. So the very next day I packed my traps and journeyed to the Rand.

But I found that my friend the inventor had mysteriously disappeared.

CHAPTER III.

THE first visit that I paid on my arrival in Johannesburg was to a well-known gun-shop in Market Square, in a workshop attached to which my friend had worked his invention. He was not there when I called. That did not surprise me so much, because he might well have been at his home, but what did surprise me was that there was no trace whatever of the gun on which he had been employed. I made inquiries, not of the gun-shop proprietor himself—if he had been there he would doubtless have been able to inform me about all that had occurred. But there was only an assistant present in the shop who professed blank ignorance about the whole matter. There seemed to me to be something suspicious in the business, and it filled me with considerable disquietude. I

accordingly set off at a smart walk to the private house of my friend.

I found his wife and daughter in tears. To my astonishment I learned that he had been arrested on a charge of manufacturing arms and concealing them from the knowledge of the Boer Government. At that time the Boer Government were filled with an insane suspicion that thousands of guns belonging to the Reform Committee had not been delivered over to the authorities, and were still concealed in mines and other hiding-places in anticipation of another rising. The merest whisper that a mechanician of Johannesburg had a Maxim gun in his possession, about which he had not informed the Government, was sufficient to procure his arrest.

This was all the information which I was able to procure with regard to the misfortune of my friend, but he was expected home that evening, and I knew that I should then learn all the particulars of his arrest. They were as follows:

A well-known private detective of Johan-

nesburg, whose office is situated in Fox Street, had informed Mr Van der Merwe, one of the chief villains of my plot, that in a certain workshop a Maxim gun was to be found. I may point out that the temptation to give information of all kinds to the Transvaal Government was enormous, owing to the vast bribes which they were prepared to offer for the slightest atom of intelligence. Mr Van der Merwe himself was said to be in Government employ, and there is good reason to believe that he had received a large sum of money for a hoax he had already played upon the authorities with regard to the Reformers' rifles. The facts were given to me by an English clerk in the office of General Joubert himself. Van der Merwe is said to have apprised the Executive Council that he knew a place in Johannesburg where a large number of the guns were concealed. He received the bribe that had been offered to anyone who should bring such information, and was instructed to conduct a body of Zarps to the hiding-place in question. But, lo and behold, when they

arrived at what was supposed to be the concealed armoury, the arms had vanished into thin air. "Mein Gott," said Van der Merwe, "the verdomdte Uitlanders, they have taken ze gons away!" It is almost incredible that such a barefaced trick should impose upon any responsible Government. But we have always got to remember that the Government of the Transvaal is largely a Government of ignorant peasants. Van der Merwe pocketed between four and five hundred pounds by thus hoodwinking the authorities. As I say, the gentleman who informed me of these facts was a clerk in General Joubert's service.

Not satisfied with this haul Van der Merwe had cast about for some other means of finding money. When the private detective brought in the news of the concealed Maxim, he immediately informed Mr Scheepers, Chief of the Customs in Johannesburg. Scheepers and Van der Merwe had turned up at the gun-shop in Market Square. Scheepers had put his seal upon the gun and ordered it and its inventor to be immediately

taken to Pretoria. And while all this trouble was going on and my friend was indignantly remonstrating against the treatment he received, Mr Van der Merwe was characteristically trying to keep in with both sides in the hope of getting money from both.

"Dat is all right, my friend, dat is all right. You trust to me. I vill get you off. I vill speak for you to the Government. I am vell in. You trust to me, dat will be all right."

The object of Van der Merwe in making these protestations, which excited Scheepers' anger, will easily be understood a little further on.

When my friend arrived at Pretoria, he was immediately taken before President Kruger and the Executive Council. Dr Leyds was present on that occasion. There was a very excited meeting of the Council, Kruger and some of the older Boers seeming to imagine that they had here unearthed a second terrible Johannesburg conspiracy against their own autocratic power. My friend was dismissed, however, pending further investigation. He was allowed to

return home that night, but ordered to appear at the War Office on the following morning, when his fate should be decided.

Next morning, accordingly, we journeyed together to Pretoria. We were ushered into General Joubert's private sanctum by Mr Da Sousa, Head Clerk of the Transvaal War Office. This was the first occasion on which I had ever seen the celebrated Boer General. He bowed to us very courteously: handed my friend the key of the big Maxim case without speaking, and waved his hand signifying that he should open it. The case was opened and the gun was found to be in exactly the same condition as it had been before it left Johannesburg. It had not been tampered with in any way. General Joubert informed us that we might take the gun back and work at it undisturbed, but that we should not be allowed to move it about, and must apprise the Government of any change in its destination.

When my friend and I finally issued into Church Square, he was in a state of the deepest dejection and despair. Some of the

wealthiest men in Johannesburg had been backing him financially. They had displayed a great interest in his invention, hoping no doubt that it should ultimately come to something and so reward them a hundredfold for their money which they had spent on its preparation. But after the matter had been brought to the ears of the Transvaal Government, it could not be expected that these men would incur Paul Kruger's resentment a second time, by having anything to do with arms and clandestine inventions. They had already suffered sufficiently for their complicity in the Jameson Raid. "Once bitten twice shy." In the present suspicious temper of the Boer Government, it would, my friend thought, be absolutely compromising for any millionaire to display any further interest in his invention. He was thus, as I have said, in a state of the greatest dejection and despair.

I endeavoured to reassure him as much as possible. I pointed out that at that moment the Transvaal itself was arming

to the teeth and was willing to expend vast sums on anybody who should effect for it the latest and best improvements in artillery.

"Why," I said, "should you not approach the Transvaal War Office itself and offer them the pre-emption of your invention?"

My friend is not a man of a very aggressive personality. Although he consented to my proposal, it was agreed between us that when we called upon General Joubert I should do most of the talking.

We walked together to his comfortable one-storeyed house which is not far from Pretoria Station. We were ushered into his study, a large comfortable room, with a huge desk in the middle of the floor, the lid of which was covered with papers bearing the official stamp. The General received us still more graciously than he had done in the forenoon, gave us tea, talked very freely of his adventures of all kinds in various parts of South Africa, and discussed his visits to England. He gave me the

impression of a man of charming and kindly personality. He was very much interested in what we had to say about the gun; in fact, he took up the proposal with great eagerness and impetuosity, and promised to lay it before the Executive Council on the following morning.

On the following morning, accordingly, we called again upon General Joubert. He informed us very pleasantly that the whole thing had been settled with the Council, and that they were prepared to take up our invention upon certain terms. They advanced my friend nearly a hundred pounds to go back to Johannesburg and defray the expenses which he had already incurred with his mechanical work. They agreed further that until the gun should be finally perfected we should have the power to draw upon the Boer Government for such sums as were necessary in carrying out the invention. In return for this we agreed on our part that when the gun was invented it should be shown first of all to the Transvaal War Office Officials. If it proved acceptable to them they should

have the right to buy it at a price fixed upon by ourselves, but if this price should seem to them to be inordinate, or if the negotiations should fall through for some other reason, it was stipulated that we should reimburse the Transvaal Government for all the sums expended on our behalf. My friend, the inventor, immediately returned to Johannesburg, wound up his business there, and established his headquarters at Pretoria, under the immediate supervision of the Transvaal Officials, in order to perfect the machine gun.

And now the villain, or rather one of the villains of the plot, appears upon the scene. I have already mentioned that when the gun was arrested in Johannesburg Mr Van der Merwe excited the anger of Scheepers, the Customs Commissioner, by his "soft sawder" and his oily assurances to the inventor that he personally, being well in with the Boer Government, could make this matter all right. When Van der Merwe discovered that we had made the matter all right with General Joubert, and that we might, if the invention were a success, be ultimately in the

position to draw an enormous sum of money from the Boer Government, he immediately approached us with the information that it was largely owing to his friendly offices that we had been successful in getting such an agreement from the Executive Council. This was not all. He gave us pretty plainly to understand that when the time came for the gun to be finally decided upon he would be in a position to use the utmost influence to secure a favourable decision for ourselves. And further, that no matter how exorbitant the sum which we should ask, he would easily arrange that our terms should be granted by the Transvaal Government. Naturally my friend and I, knowing what the corruption of the Transvaal was, and how large a part bribery played in all Government negotiations, considered that the services of Van der Merwe would be of inestimable value to ourselves. We saw perfectly well what he wanted; in fact, he gave us pretty plainly to understand that what he wanted was a considerable share in all the monies to be derived from the invention.

This transaction, everybody will agree, casts a lurid light on the morality of Boer political life. Here was one of the most prominent Boers of Johannesburg, a man universally believed to be in the employ of the Government, making terms with men who had business dealings with the Government, and perfectly ready to draw money from them for a promise that he would bleed his own Government as much as possible on their behalf.

I append the agreement entered into between Van der Merwe and my friend. It was written in his own house on Hospital Hill, Johannesburg. As will be perceived, he objected to some of the expressions in the original drawing out of the document, and they had to be altered to suit his whim, and initialled by the two parties to the transaction.

Naturally, in the course of these negotiations I met Van der Merwe very often, and it was through, not the friendship, but the business intimacy that thus sprang up between us that he was ultimately embold-

ened to approach me with a proposal that I should become a paid agent in the Secret Service of the Transvaal. It was he, also, who first mooted to me the "deep damnation" of Mr Rhodes's taking off.

Agreement referred to on preceding page.

JOHANNESBURG, 1896.

Agreement between and Van der Merwe. I do hereby agree to give and grant, as I hereby do, to the above-mentioned Van der Merwe, one-fourth interest in the patent of a certain machine gun, invented by , which is now under construction, and to be patented by the Transvaal Government.—Value received.

(Signed) _____

(,,) VAN DER MERWE.

_____, witness.

CHAPTER IV.

ONE fine morning, shortly after these proceedings, I met Van der Merwe, who hailed me with what I thought even then to be a somewhat suspicious affability. He slapped me on the back, greeted me very effusively, and asked me to go along to the Grand Hotel, which is just opposite the Government Buildings in Pretoria, and there have a drink with him. I accepted his invitation. I went up to his bedroom, where he immediately produced a bottle of Heidsieck and a box of special Dutch cigars imported from Holland by himself. We toasted each other, lit up, and began a purely general and desultory conversation.

Gradually the conversation drifted to the question of politics. He looked at me furtively askance, and said:

"Ach, that Rhodes is a b—— scoundrel."

He went on complaining in a maundering way that Rhodes was a thorough enemy to his country, and likely to cause the ruin of the Transvaal.

"But," he said, as if dropping the suggestion casually, "if those thousands of rifles which we know to be still concealed in Johannesburg could be taken away from the conspirators, Rhodes's teeth would be drawn; he would not have an army ready to his hand the next time he organized a raid against the members of the Transvaal Republic."

To the latter part of this remark I made no answer whatever, but I demurred to his reference to Rhodes, and said that whatever the faults of the founder of Rhodesia might be, to me at least he seemed to be a very great man indeed.

The conversation drifted aimlessly along, but I noticed that Van der Merwe was examining me furtively with sidelong glances from time to time.

"By-the-by," he said, at last, "you were

a member of the Australian Brigade, weren't you?"

"I was," said I.

"Yes!" said he. "I remember seeing your photograph in Pritchard Street. Very well, then, I suppose you know a thing or two about the Reform movement?"

"Oh, yes!" said I.

"I can tell you, my boy," said he, "the fellow who unearths those guns brought into the country by the Reform Committee has a big sum of money waiting for him from the hands of the Boer Government."

I was silent. I saw there was something in the air, but waited for him to declare himself.

"Yes!" said he, as if speaking in a purely general way. "I could get you five hundred pounds for every Maxim you discovered."

I was tired of his beating about the bush, and came roughly to the point.

"What do you want?" I asked.

Again he started from the point, and went off into mere platitudes. He lamented that thousands of innocent lives might be en-

dangered through this material ever lying ready to hand in Johannesburg to prepare the way for another popular revolt. He repeated that it was the duty of a Christian man to do everything in his power to have this means of future bloodshed removed as soon as possible.

I began to suspect that Mr Van der Merwe, whatever his intentions were, was not playing on the square. He had evidently some proposal of a somewhat shady character to make to me, but it was not this, I was sure, that caused his hesitation. You must remember that I knew already that the man was a thorough double-dealer, because I knew, and have documentary proof to show, that he was already bleeding both his own Government and us in connection with the same transaction. Knowing he was a scoundrel, I determined to play the policy of diamond cut diamond. When he turned to me, therefore, and asked again in a diffident, hesitating, round-about way as regards my knowledge of the guns, I said bluffly and bluntly:

"Yes, I do know where there are lots of them!"

I did know where a few guns were concealed, but my intention was rather to pull Van der Merwe's leg and discover the game he was up to, than to become a secret service agent of the Boers. He immediately displayed great delight at my disclosure. He proposed that we should stand in together in this affair.

"But how shall I be paid for my services in this matter?" I inquired.

"Oh!" he said, "I will see to that. Here is some to go on with," and he threw down a sum of money on the table. He said:

"I will manage it with the Government all right. You find out the facts for me, and I will use my influence with them to see that you are exceedingly well paid."

At this statement of his I began to suspect him more than ever. It occurred to me that the game he was really up to was this: that I should undertake some very

dangerous and somewhat disreputable work for him, and that he, for the information thus given to the authorities, should draw an enormous sum of money on his own behalf, and pay out a pittance to me for the work that I had done for him. However, as you will see, I waited awhile before acting upon my suspicions.

Van der Merwe returned to Johannesburg that day. He said he was going to fix the matter. This increased my suspicions. If he were going to arrange the business, why should he go off to Johannesburg? Surely Pretoria, the headquarters of the Boer Government, was the proper place to fix up a job in the Transvaal Secret Service. However, I waited a day or two. From Johannesburg Van der Merwe wired to me at the Transvaal Hotel: "Business arranged; meet me tomorrow." But when he came down on the morrow he fobbed me off with another excuse. There was still some delay, some important negotiation to take place. And all this he related with a profound air of

mystery and self-importance, as if he were the one man in the Transvaal who could carry a job of this kind to a successful conclusion.

By this time I was thoroughly convinced of the double game that he was playing, and that he wished to make me nothing but a poorly paid tool of his own. Consequently, when he returned to Johannesburg, the same night, I determined to have done with underlings and to go straight to Dr Leyds himself.

I sent in my name to the famous doctor, and had no difficulty in procuring an interview. I asked to be allowed to speak to him in private, and he sent his clerk out of the room. It was a room adjoining the Transvaal Secret Bureau, presided over at that time by Mr Lex Goldman (pronounced Choldman). When we were alone, Leyds turned his eyes upon me. I shall never forget that first interview with a man who was ultimately to discuss with me in cold blood the murder of Mr Cecil Rhodes. Dr Leyds is well known in South Africa

as a man of great hypnotic power. When his dark, piercing glance was fixed upon my eyes I seemed to be aware of a sinister influence in the room. I have mixed much among men, and have held my own among many rough crowds, but I never had such a feeling of awe, and almost of terror, as when I met the lithe, dark, Dutch East Indiaman.

I hesitated for a moment beneath his piercing glance. He frowned, looked at me sharply, and said in an imperative voice:

"Well, go on!"

In a hesitating manner I then asked him whether he knew Mr Van der Merwe.

"Yes!" he said, slowly, as if he were speculating over something in his own mind.

I then told him bluntly that I had been approached by Van der Merwe, as I understood by the authority of the Transvaal Government, with a view to discover the guns concealed by the Reform Committee in Johannesburg. Leyds immediately

started to his feet. He opened the door leading to Lex Goldman's Secret Bureau, went in, and I could hear that a muttered conversation was taking place. He came back in a few minutes.

"*You* come with me," he said, took me into the next room, and introduced me to the head of the Transvaal Secret Agency.

I practically repeated to Goldman the conversation which I had been having with Leyds. He interrupted me before I could finish, and blurted out:

"We will give you thirty pounds a month and all your expenses if you join our service as a secret agent."

Here, perhaps, I should pause to explain that the thirty pounds a month allowed as a nominal wage to members of the Transvaal Secret Service is the smallest part of their emoluments. They are allowed to send in enormous bills for expenses, and these bills are never questioned by the authorities. I should like to point out, also, that the payment of the members of the Secret Service is one of the chief means by which the Trans-

vaal under-officials defraud the Treasury. Receipts are not often given by the secret agents for the pay which they draw; and in this case, of course, it is perfectly possible for a confidential clerk to say that he paid out a thousand pounds to a man, when, as a matter of fact, he has only paid him a few hundreds. When receipts *are* written by the agents, in acknowledgment of monies, the sums are never written out in full, but simply indicated by figures. It is thus perfectly possible for an unscrupulous clerk to put one or more ciphers at the end of a couple of figures or so, and thus run up the sum, which he is supposed to have paid, from hundreds to thousands. Thus, if fifty pounds were coming to me, I should write it in my receipt as "£50," and in many cases this £50 would appear when it went before the Treasury as "£500."

I informed Goldman that, of course, I should have to return to Johannesburg, and to have a good look round to see how the land lay before I took steps to actually reveal the guns. I represented that it was

an exceedingly risky matter, and that I must proceed with caution. He gave me a large sum of money down, in order to return to Johannesburg and defray my expenses, and I went up there for a few days, and had an exceedingly good time with the money which the Transvaal Authorities had so confidingly given me. Needless to say, I did nothing to betray the interests of my fellow-countrymen.

When I returned to Pretoria I called upon Mr Lex Goldman to report. I found that he had a somewhat risky job for me. I shall relate this adventure in detail, because it was my successful conduct of the affair that led the Transvaal Authorities to believe in me as a man of courage and address, ready for any desperate enterprise.

Goldman informed me that several very important papers had been stolen from the Government Buildings, and asked me if I was able to discover them. I said that I was willing to try. I went on to ask if he had any idea as to who the robber was. He said that he did not know, but informed

me significantly that I *might* be able to find the papers in the house of Van der Merwe. I received another large sum of money to defray my expenses, and immediately set out for Johannesburg.

I set up my headquarters at the Grand National Hotel. I had lunch there, and went along to call upon Van der Merwe at his house upon Hospital Hill. He was not at home, and I returned to the hotel, uncertain as to my future proceedings.

I was the more worried as to my immediate scheme of operations, because that night there happened to be a dance at the Masonic Hall, which I was particularly anxious to attend for personal reasons of my own. If I went there it would obviously be impossible for me, I thought, to conduct a campaign against the dwelling-house of Van der Merwe. I cudgelled my brains, and invented a hundred different schemes, but finally was forced to reject them all. I looked in at the Empire Music Hall, and then strolled back to my hotel in an absolute state of indecision. I could not

possibly see by what means I should be able to put my hand upon the papers that night and also appear at the ball, at which, as I say, I had very particular reasons for showing myself.

Suddenly, however, as I was passing through the bar, approaching a group of men whom I did not know, I heard the name of "Schelm Daavid" and then "ball at the Masonic." I did not know the men, as I say, and could not possibly question them as to what they meant, but it flashed across my mind with a thrill of hope, that perhaps Van der Merwe himself was to be at the ball that night, and if so I saw a way of achieving both my purposes.

I dashed upstairs, tumbled into a rough old suit, took a thick cudgel in my hand, and set out through the darkness to Hospital Hill.

It was a beautiful clear-dark night, if you know what I mean, with no moon, and only a faint glimmer of starlight, but the air so pure and delicate that you could see the dim shapes of things as they

loomed high and shadowy through the stillness. As I went up the slope, I remember there was a sudden scurry of pattering feet, and a dog hunted a cat across my path; and the animals came so near me in their rage of terror and pursuit that I nearly tripped over them. My nerves were all tense and alive, owing to the excitement of the occasion, and I remember still the shrill scream, or yell rather, which the cat emitted when the dog gripped her in his jaws.

On my way to Hospital Hill, I had to pass a waste piece of ground where football and other matches are played, and which is well known in Johannesburg by the name of The Wanderers. It is surrounded by a barbed wire fence, which is exceedingly difficult to reconnoitre in the dark. Just as I was opposite the spot, I heard the voices of a number of people approaching from the direction in which I was going. As it was obviously to my advantage to be seen as little as possible in the neighbourhood of Van der Merwe's house, if it should

be ultimately proved that it was broken into that night and valuable papers abstracted from his possession, I immediately determined to hide until the travellers should have disappeared. I plunged at the barbed wire fence, my trousers caught upon one of the prongs, tore hideously, and in my endeavour to extricate myself I made a considerable noise. A dog came from the darkness, barking furiously, and I crept close to the ground, sweating with fear lest I should be discovered. The footsteps came near, past close beside me, sounding abnormally loud in the stillness, and then faded away in the distance. When they were heard no longer, I rose to my feet and crept forward stealthily through the darkness.

When I reached Van der Merwe's house, I reconnoitred it carefully from every side. In one corner of the house lights were glimmering. It occurred to me that probably every member of his family would be present at the ball, and that only a few servants would be left in the house. But, knowing what Johannesburg servants are, it occurred

to me that probably some of their suitors would be present that evening, and that I might have to encounter a considerable crowd when I burgled the establishment. I examined all the windows carefully, crouching back into the shadows whenever a footstep broke the stillness of the night.

To the right of the main door was the dining-room and the drawing-room was behind it. I had an idea that the large room to the left of the door and the lobby was the bedroom of Mr and Mrs Van der Merwe, but I had no definite fact in my possession to guarantee that belief—it was only a surmise. I crept along to the window opening upon this room. It was raised a few inches from the ground. What luck, I thought; but suddenly, even as I was filled with pleasure to think that my task had been so facilitated, through the chink there came the sound of a loud laugh from far away within the house, and following that the sound of a door being heavily slammed. The reverberation of the latter noise echoed

all through the house. Evidently there were a number of people somewhere in the place, and as this was my first experience in house-breaking, my heart stood still. But I must make an effort at once if I was to effect an entrance at all. I put my hand to the under side of the sash and lifted it boldly. It creaked with a horrible squealing, long-drawn-out grinding noise. Gripping the inside woodwork of the window, and giving a leap from the ground, I pulled myself up and wriggled my body through the aperture between the lower sash of the window and the window sill. As my arm shot forward it encountered a jug or vase in the darkness, which fell with a loud crash, and was shivered in a thousand atoms. Between the wall of the room and the carpet there was evidently a strip of bare board, and the glass or earthenware encountering this made a noise which, to my nerves in their tense condition, seemed horribly and alarmingly loud.

At last I stood within the room, and I remember that the fragments of the broken jug, or glass, or vase, or whatever it was, ground

beneath the soles of my feet with a peculiar crunching sound. In fact, so new was I to the experiences of the life on which I was about to enter, and so tense and excited were my nerves with the novelty and risk of the situation, that every physical fact of that night remains burned in upon my memory. I can remember still as vividly as if it were yesterday, the quality of every sound that broke the stillness, the peculiar smell of a faint perfume which seemed to pervade the room, and the sudden whirring jar of an eight-day clock that suddenly sounded from some lobby or corridor far away.

My first feeling when I found myself inside the room, holding my breath lest I should be discovered, was one of absolute guilt. Even if a man is suddenly found doing a thing stealthily which he has a perfect right to do, he will blush and look confused. The fact that he has been doing this thing on the sly seems to prove that he is a criminal and covers him with a sense of shame. That is a well-known experience. How much more was this

feeling mine, when I found myself practically acting the part of a house-breaker, holding my breath in the darkness of the room lest I should be discovered as having effected a burglarious entry. I had no compunctions whatsoever, I may say, as to the task on which I was engaged. It seemed to me to be perfectly right to find out as much as I possibly could about the intricacies of Boer political life, that I might ultimately reveal these facts to our own Imperial Authorities. But though that was so, and though I could perfectly justify my proceedings to my own mind, I nevertheless must confess that I was entirely possessed with this feeling of guiltiness superinduced by the stealthiness of my proceedings. The fact that I had to creep about, to grope in the dark, to start at every noise, and listen anxiously, made me feel like a criminal.

I remember, for example, that there was a small clock on the mantelpiece of the room, and that it ticked loudly in the darkness. Every time I stood to listen, the sound of this ticking seemed to break in

with an insistent loudness upon my naked brain. This was especially so when for a second time the loud laugh that I had heard before seemed to reverberate through the empty house. This time, however, it had a more muffled sound, as if it had come through closed doors. Obviously the servants and their friends, whoever the latter might be, were occupied with concerns of their own. I felt that I had time to pursue my work in safety. Still, I might be interrupted at any moment, and so I set to work at once.

I struck a match, and it spurted up with a bluish flame. There were many looking-glasses in the room, I remember, three on the dressing-table in a folding mirror, one on the door of the wardrobe, and another above the mantelpiece; and I saw with a start many sudden pictures of myself, a desperado, looking ghastly in the blue light I held in my hand. I shall never forget to my dying day the sudden thrill which the sudden sight of so many selves gave me.

I lit a candle and surveyed the room. I

had been right in my surmise. It was evidently the bedroom of Van der Merwe and his wife, being a big room, comfortably furnished, with a large double bed. A pair of stays, an under petticoat, and some woman's finery were scattered about, as if it had been left there hurriedly when its owner was dressing to go out.

I opened a cupboard in the room, but before I had time to investigate, the sound of louder confused voices was heard in the distance, as if a door had been opened and allowed the noise to travel more easily along the passages. I immediately blew out the light, and went close to the door, so that if opened it should swing back and hide me for the moment from whoever entered the room. I clasped the cudgel tightly in my hand, ready to strike if need be. The steps came on, sounding to my ears abnormally loud in the stillness, and to my horror a hand groped about the handle of the door, the catch shot back, and somebody entered the room in the darkness. When the door swung back against me some woman's

dresses that were hanging on pegs behind it swung closely across my face, and a pin of some sort tore across my nose and cheek, making an ugly gash. After a time I could feel the blood trickling down into my mouth, and it tasted salt on my lips.

The intruder, whoever it was, was heard floundering about the room in the darkness, I could hear some ornament fall upon the mantelpiece as it came into contact with the groping hand, and the moment after I heard a voice say in Dutch : " Confound it, where's the matches?" At that I knew I was safe for the time being. The visitor, whoever he or she might be, had evidently intended to strike a light and look for something which was needed. But they went out of the room, and I heard the steps proceed along the passage. I felt certain, however, that they would soon return. I reflected that I could not hide within the cupboard which I had already opened, because my visitor might look there for the object for which he had come. So I whipped below the bed. As I crept under the valance my feet struck a

box, or case of some kind, which was not very heavy evidently, for it shot away from the impulsion of my movement. Before the noise had died away, my visitor had again entered the room with a light in his hand. I dared scarcely breathe, because I was afraid that the noise which I had made in shifting this case, or box, or whatever it might be, must have attracted his attention. Suddenly, however, he shouted, "Oh! all right, here it is," and went off, slamming the bedroom door behind him.

I lay for some minutes before I again dared to venture forth. At last, however, I crept again into the middle of the room. This time I was determined to make a thorough search of the apartment without the risk of interruption. I forthwith locked the door from the inside. The bolt grated horribly, and that was another of the sounds which impressed themselves on my recollection on that adventurous evening. That done I turned to search every nook and corner of the room. I looked everywhere, opened presses and cupboards of

every description, rummaged in the wardrobe, and tumbled most of the clothes out of a quaint old Dutch chest which stood near the head of the bed. I began to fear that my search in that particular apartment would prove a failure. Although there were a good many people in some corner or other of the house, it seemed to me that I would have to proceed to a search of the other apartments. Suddenly, however, it flashed across my mind that what I sought might be beneath the bed. I remembered the square case or box which I had touched when I suddenly hid from the intruder. I held the blue flame of a match under the valance, which caught fire, by the way, in my haste and excitement, and was only with difficulty extinguished. There was a smell of burnt cloth all about the room. I peered to discover what I sought. There was a square brown leather paper case, shaped like a despatch box. I lugged it out with a thrill of expectation and hope. On the lid of the box were the words "Van der Merwe." The box

was locked, but remembering the hint which Goldman had given me that the papers were in all probability in Van der Merwe's house, I felt sure that I now had them in my possession. Grasping the box I made a dart at the window, poised it on the sill, groped my way through, feet foremost, and, still holding my precious discovery, dropped to the ground outside.

Without pausing to think or consider how to avoid observation, I made my way with all possible speed, practically running all the time, to the Grand National Hotel. I darted up to my bedroom, doffed my shabby old suit of clothes, put the despatch box in my portmanteau, and locked it, donned my dress suit, and made my way as quickly as possible to the Masonic Hall. Van der Merwe was there. Whoever he blamed for the theft of his papers he could not possibly blame me, because, as it afterwards transpired, I had reached the Masonic Hall only a short time after his own arrival. When the dance was over I strolled down towards the Empire Music Hall, and into

a café kept by a Mrs Joel—some connection of Woolf Joel's, it is said—and had supper. I had been seen practically the whole of the evening by many Johannesburghers who knew me intimately. It was thus impossible for anybody to associate me with the lifting of Van der Merwe's despatch box.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN I returned to Pretoria I was immediately presented with a hundred pounds by way of business expenses. The despatch box which I had discovered in Van der Merwe's house I handed over to Mr Lex Goldman at his private residence. After this time I was told always when I wished to call upon Mr Lex Goldman to pay my visit to his private residence, and not to the Government Buildings—this, no doubt, with the object of diverting suspicion from my movements in general. All the Transvaal officials with whom I came in contact seemed to be exceedingly pleased with the method in which I carried out a somewhat risky expedition to Johannesburg. They were all smiles and effusion when they met me. I perceived pretty clearly that I had gone up

considerably in their esteem. When the despatch box had been thoroughly ransacked it was handed back to me empty. I stuck a label upon it, addressed it in a feigned hand, and sent it back to Van der Merwe at his house upon Hospital Hill.

I must explain here that most of the work which I did for the Secret Service of the Transvaal was of the same nature as that of my purloining the private papers of Van der Merwe. So much bribery and corruption prevailed in the Secret Service, and the whole affair was so badly managed and so badly organized, that they could never trust their own agents and instruments, so that it was necessary that they should employ any number of subsidiary agents, in order to spy upon their other agents to see that they ran straight and acted fair by the Government. I will give two examples of this before I come to the plot in which it was proposed to me that I should take a hand in the murder of the founder of Rhodesia.

There was a friend of mine, or an acquaintance rather, in the Transvaal, whose name I

do not wish to give here, but whose character I am describing sufficiently by saying that he had been in the service of the Clan Na Gael in America. This individual was introduced by myself to the Secret Service Authorities, and, as I shrewdly suspected, he was employed in the same capacity as myself, as an agent and watcher in general on behalf of the Transvaal Government. It was not till afterwards, however, when I had an opportunity in my official capacity of overhauling his papers, that I discovered the full extent of his complicity in the various plots and schemes organized by the Secret Service Bureau. This gentleman had been sent to Delagoa Bay to detect the means by which the members of the Reform Committee had been able to hoodwink the Custom-house Officers of the Transvaal and smuggle guns in through Lorenço Marquez, and Koomati Poort. It was perfectly obvious to the authorities of Pretoria that some of the officials of Koomati Poort must have been bribed very largely in order to permit the passage of the guns. My friend Blank, as

I will call him, the moment he was taken into the service of Mr Lex Goldman, was immediately despatched to the frontier and to Delagoa Bay to spy upon the Boer officials themselves. I wish to emphasize this repeatedly, that the corruption of the Transvaal is such that practically every man in the service was a traitor. No man could trust his neighbour, and, consequently, the Government was put to tremendous expense in order to see that its underlings did not present false reports, but conduct their business in an honest and efficient manner.

So much was this the case that they carried their system of espionage to the third degree, and I myself was despatched in turn to the frontier and to Delagoa Bay to see that the spy deputed to watch the spies was not himself a scoundrel, but that he himself was presenting honest and efficient reports!

One of the chief reasons of the credulity and anxiety displayed by the Boer Government during these eventful times was, of course, the fact that they were in daily and

weekly expectation of another rising on the part of Johannesburg. They were constantly expecting to hear reports that. a further conspiracy was on foot, and their agents, knowing this, were always perfectly willing to feed their credulity and to aggrandize their positions by sending in cock and bull stories about this, that, and the other revolutionary movement against Paul Kruger and his gang.

My friend Blank, who had been despatched, as I say, to the frontier and to Delagoa Bay to watch the Custom-house Officers, and I myself who had been despatched in turn to watch my friend Blank, knowing that this was the state of the Government mind, set ourselves to take advantage of it. We knew perfectly well that if ever we were ordered to discover facts detrimental to the interests of Britain we should likely lose our exceedingly lucrative posts in the Secret Service Bureau, and so we determined to take as much advantage as possible of the morbid credulity of the Boer Government with regard

to possible conspiracies, and to send in false reports of this, that, and the other movement which we claimed to have discovered on the frontier and in Johannesburg. Our *modus operandi* was as follows: Blank would present a report to the Government in which he bore witness that he had discovered compromising facts with regard to a possible future conspiracy. Gullible, however, as the Secret Service Authorities were, they were not quite ready to shell out money on the strength of a single report sent in by any interested individual; but when I, who was supposed to be acting quite independently, sent in a report which practically corroborated in every detail the report previously sent in by my friend Blank, with whom they did not know that I had any business connection, the officers of the Secret Service Bureau were perfectly ready to shell out money to our heart's desire. By taking the letters, then, in this way, Blank and myself were able to pose for a long time as efficient servants of the Transvaal Secret Service, when in reality we were

fooling them to the top of their bent, and gulling them.

Another of the Transvaal officials whom I was deputed to watch was a Mr Fergusson, who occupied an important position in the Detective Department. As is well known, many underlings of the Transvaal made considerable fortunes by accepting bribes to permit the running of private bars, gambling houses, houses of ill-repute, and other illicit places of resort. This Mr Fergusson was suspected of conniving in such practices, and also suspected of buying gold illicitly, and I was deputed to watch him and report upon his proceedings to the Government. I am bound to confess, however, that I was able to discover nothing to his detriment.

As will be seen, I had by this time given the Secret Bureau ample proof that I was a fairly efficient servant. They began to believe, apparently, that I was ripe for any desperate enterprise which they should think fit to put before me.

It was at this stage of affairs that I met

Mr Van der Merwe one morning in the train going up from Pretoria to Johannesburg. I was never able to discover the exact relation of Van der Merwe to the Secret Service Bureau. It may be that when I was put on to extract his papers they were merely playing off a ruse upon me to discover whether I was really an honest and daring servant of their cause. At any rate, whatever may have been discovered in the despatch box which I abstracted from Van der Merwe's bedroom, and whatever may have been the nature of the revelations therein concerned, they did not seem to have deprived Van der Merwe of the confidence of the Boer Government.

He was as effusive as ever when he met me that morning going from Pretoria to Johannesburg. We had a carriage to ourselves, and he was amply supplied as usual with some of his own extra-special Dutch cigars.

He began upon his old theme, the manifold iniquities of Mr Cecil Rhodes. He said in a very significant voice, that if Rhodes

should happen to die, it would prove a god-send to the whole of South Africa, and then, looking at me with meaning in his eye, he said slowly, with a great intention in every word which he used:

"There will be a great deal of money for any man who should see that gentleman removed."

It was for such an opportunity as this that I had been waiting during the whole time of my service in the Secret Bureau. I wanted to discover some thoroughly compromising fact with regard to the Boer Government which I might bring over to my own side, and by so doing at once serve my own country and gain a satisfactory reward for myself. So I pretended in as cunning a manner as I could possibly assume to fall in with Van der Merwe's ideas. In order to discover the full extent of the plot I said I thought I might see my way to having that done, and with that understanding I left Mr Van der Merwe at the Johannesburg Railway Station.

The next day I called upon Dr Leyds at

his private house at Pretoria. I was admitted at once to his sanctum. I said to him:

"I have been having a talk with Mr Van der Merwe."

"Oh, yes!" said Leyds, as if he knew all about the matter already, "and he put a proposal before you."

I was considerably startled by the glib readiness with which he said this, because it seemed to imply that he knew all about the matter already, that he had discussed it, and was a party to the nefarious scheme that had been put before me. It was with the intention of discovering this that I had called upon Dr Leyds that morning, and I was gratified to find that the scheme put before me was not merely that of an irresponsible agent, but one in which one of the highest officials in the Transvaal was personally engaged.

"Are you prepared to carry through that scheme?" Leyds went on.

I said, "Yes."

"Very well, call upon me to-morrow evening," and I bowed and left him.

When I called upon Leyds on the following evening, we had a very long and a very intimate discussion. I have never met a man in my life so glib, so oily, and so persuasive in his manner as Leyds was that evening. He indulged in a long-winded speech full of the most subtle sophistry, ringing the changes constantly upon the phrase that it was better that one man should die than that a whole nation should be ruined.

I may point out here that although the Boer authorities knew that Mr Cecil Rhodes was returning to England, to stand his trial, so to speak, before the Reform Committee, they believed to a man that this was a farce, and that Mr Rhodes, even after the trial, would be as great a menace as ever to the peace of the Transvaal. They may be right, or they may be wrong, but the fact is indisputable that every Boer whom I met in Pretoria and Johannesburg believed that Rhodes was then, and would continue, unless he should happen to die, to be the one terrible danger which Dutch authority had to encounter in South Africa.

Leyds did not actually suggest that I should murder Rhodes with my own hands. What he said was exactly this, that there would be a large sum of money waiting for the man who should come back to Pretoria and inform the Boer authorities that Cecil Rhodes was "no more."

I wish to point out, however, that although this was as far as Leyds would go in conversation with me, his tool, Van der Merwe, had actually suggested to me that poison would be a very efficient means of removing Mr Cecil Rhodes, whose headquarters were at that time at Bulawayo while he was engaged in suppressing the Matabele Revolt. Van der Merwe suggested that it would be very easy to get at Rhodes's native servants, and have the poison inserted in his morning coffee.

My intention was to procure a sum of money at once from Leyds, as much information on paper as possible, to bunk at once to Cape Town, and inform Rhodes of the danger that threatened him.

As a proof of the authenticity of this nar-

rative I may mention the fact that immediately after this horrible proposal was put before me, I communicated it to my friend the inventor who was still working upon his gun. When I mentioned the matter to my friend he was as horrified as I had been at the revelation of the lengths to which the Boers were prepared to go, and advised me to abandon the Secret Service, leave political matters entirely alone, and go back to my former business. My former business, however, had sunk so low, owing to my unavoidable abstention from all active concern in it, that I was practically forced to remain in the service of the Boers for a considerable time longer, in order to earn a livelihood.

To revert, however, to my second interview with Dr Leyds, the second, that is, with regard to the plot for removing Mr Cecil Rhodes. My intention, as I say, was to get some documentary authority that might serve to compromise the Boer Government, and also a large sum of money down that might serve to feather my own nest pretty well. Dr Leyds, how-

ever, was much too old a bird to be caught by chaff. As a matter of fact, it is practically a standing rule of the Boer Secret Service, as, indeed, of every other Secret Service, that written instructions are hardly ever given to any of their agents. Leyds, therefore, proposed that I should proceed at once to Cape Town and there engage in the movement for the removal of Mr Rhodes. This, however, was not good enough for me, as I had so far nothing definite to go upon, and the matter was still left undecided when I came away from his office that evening. By the time I had my third interview with Dr Leyds with regard to this precious scheme of his or of Van der Merwe's, he had probably discovered from some spy who had been set to watch myself that I, as well as others, was not to be depended upon by the Transvaal Government. Either that or his courage had failed him, and he wished to go back upon his previous proposal. At this third interview, the third that I had with him, that is, with regard to the murder of

Mr Rhodes, but the fourth that I had with him altogether—at this third interview I say, I was shown into his drawing-room the moment I entered his house. Leyds came into the room, locked the door immediately, drew his chair close up to mine, looked me in the eyes, and asked me earnestly whether I was prepared to proceed with the scheme. I said "Yes." Thereupon he told me that I was to go round to Lex Goldman and draw as much money as I required for the journey to Cape Town.

So far all was well, but I determined to play a desperate card and secure if possible some document which might succeed in showing up the Boer Government for the corrupt and treacherous thing that it is. That is to say, I immediately asked Dr Leyds for written instructions as to how I should proceed. Thereupon his manner changed entirely; he immediately affected great indignation with regard to the whole scheme. The man proved a consummate actor. He said it was a very serious thing

to discuss in cold blood the taking of human life. As if he had not already discussed it in the coldest of cold blood on the two previous occasions!

The upshot of the whole matter was that I left him on this third occasion with the matter still undetermined. However, I called upon Lex Goldman the next morning, and found that he still intended me to go to Cape Town. Lex Goldman asked me how much I should require for immediate expenses, and I drew eighty pounds. On my way to Cape Town I stopped for a day in Johannesburg in order to procure some clothes which I required. The moment I arrived in Cape Town I wired back to Pretoria to the effect that I must have funds. The actual words that I used were: "Wire a hundred pounds immediately," and they wired this sum to the Netherlands Bank, where I procured it.

Now, just at this time Mr Cecil Rhodes was returning in triumph to Cape Town after suppressing the Matabele Revolt by his own personal exertions. He had, as everybody

remembers, gone to the caves of the insurgent chiefs, and at the imminent risk of his own life succeeded in restoring peace to Rhodesia. His prestige seemed to be re-established once more in South Africa, and it can easily be imagined that the anti-British element hated him more than ever because his fame seemed to be becoming more brilliant than ever.

When he arrived in Cape Town he met with a splendid reception. His carriage was dragged by hand from the railway station to a great arch erected by the Reception Committee in a large open space in the immediate neighbourhood. A platform was there erected, on which I myself happened to be upon that occasion, and I remember that Mr Rhodes was received there by the Reception Committee, and made a rousing speech to the crowd. He drove right from the platform to his private residence, and as he was now in Cape Town, and it was easy, or practically easy at least, for me to approach him, I determined to call upon him next morning and warn him of the conspiracy

which had been entered into against him, at the same time offering my services, in the hope that I might get a billet in his own immediate employ. It seemed to me that owing to the extraordinary popularity which he was enjoying with the populace of Cape Town and with the British generally in South Africa, the Boer oligarchy would be more determined than ever to accomplish his removal.

Next morning, accordingly, I called at Groote Schuur. As is generally the case when Mr Rhodes is at home, a great crowd of would-be politicians, globe trotters, and other busybodies were waiting about in the hopes of procuring an interview. It was Colonel Frank Rhodes who first granted me an interview. I told him that it was very important that I should have an immediate conference with his brother upon a matter of vital, personal, and political significance. He asked me to wait in the dining-room, where, I remember, the table was being laid for lunch.

After waiting a few minutes the colossus appeared, and took me outside to a quiet

corner of the verandah. He looked at me very searchingly, and asked his questions in an imperious, autocratic manner.

"Well," said he "where do *you* come from?"

"The Transvaal," said I.

"Yes," said he. "Well?"

And then I told him that I had come to inform him of a horrible plot which would harm him. I remember that these were the actual words I used. I hesitated to state the brutal fact that a conspiracy had been entered into to kill him or remove him from the scene.

He stopped dead at these words, and cast a searching look at me.

"Where are you staying?" he asked.

I told him at the Grand Hotel, Cape Town.

He touched me on the shoulder at that, and said:

"You go back to your hotel and write me a letter about the whole affair, supplying me with every detail, and send it to me at this address."

It was not till afterwards that I saw the splendid foresight and political ability of the colossus of South Africa in making this demand of myself. Mr Rhodes was at that time on his way to England to appear practically on his trial before the Raid Committee of the House of Commons. It is perfectly obvious that if he had had in his pocket an important political document, setting down in black and white a conspiracy entered into by the Transvaal Government, not merely to plan a political raid into an adjoining territory, but actually to murder in cold blood an important politician—I say, it is perfectly obvious that if Mr Rhodes had been able to produce a document of this kind, he would have aroused a storm of indignation in England on his behalf and against the Boer oligarchy, and would have brought public opinion round to his own side entirely. I have not the slightest doubt that it was with this intention that Mr Rhodes was so careful to insist upon my going back to my hotel and sending in a fully written out documentary proof of the

plot, intelligence of which I had just brought him.

Now, it had been inculcated on me, during the whole time I was in the service of the Secret Bureau of the Transvaal, that on no account whatever should I ever put anything on paper when I could possibly avoid doing so. "Do not compromise yourself" is the law of every Secret Service in the world. It can therefore be imagined what a poser Mr Rhodes had set me when he asked me to go back to my hotel and write down in black and white a full and particular account of the very daring transactions in which I had been engaged.

I spent a very restless night thinking over the matter. It was not only that my instinct warned me that I should not compromise myself by setting all these affairs in black and white, but I had also other reasons for not giving myself away to any human being without some adequate return. My intention was when I brought the matter before the notice of Mr Cecil Rhodes, to procure not money from him indeed, but some adequate

patronage as a reward for my services. Now, suppose I had given the whole thing away to him, and stated in black and white the extent to which I had hoodwinked the Transvaal Government, I should have been left, to put it in vulgar parlance, exposed to all the animosity which I was well aware the Transvaal Government could bring to bear upon any of its defaulting servants, and, at the same time, with no guarantee of reward either from Mr Cecil Rhodes upon the one hand or from the Imperial Government upon the other. True, I am inclined to think now that I made one of the great mistakes of my life in not trusting to Mr Rhodes upon that occasion, and not supplying him with a full and particular account of everything that had happened between Dr Leyds and me. At the same time, I am bound to admit that these reasons weighed sufficiently with me at the time to prevent me from writing the document which Mr Rhodes required. I considered that I had done sufficient to remove the burden of bloodguiltiness from my shoulders. I had

warned him that some of the chief men of the Transvaal had been prepared to compass his bodily harm, and, this being so, I considered that I had discharged the duty which my own conscience laid upon me.

Mr Rhodes at that time was on the point of sailing to England. I do not know how far his memory will extend back, considering the multifarious interests and concerns to which he had at that time to devote his attention, but I think it not unlikely that he will remember that I wrote him still another letter amplifying to some extent the information which I had given him.

CHAPTER VI.

A GOOD deal of the work which I did for the Secret Service Bureau under the Transvaal Government was in connection with the illicit sale of liquor. As everybody knows, very stringent regulations were made by the Boer authorities to prevent the sale of alcohol to Kaffirs. However, as everybody knows also, these regulations in very many cases were never carried out, and the reason of that was that the magistrates and police officials were bribed by the liquor dealers to look the other way while the traffic was going on. Owing to the enormous profits made by sellers of alcohol in the Transvaal, it was very easy for liquor merchants to set aside some small portion of these enormous profits for the purposes of bribery and corruption. The result of this on the general morals and well-being

of the community was of course detrimental in the highest degree. From the point of view of the moralist—a point of view which, of course, did not commend itself very much to most of the people in Johannesburg—the Kaffirs were degraded to a level lower than that of the brutes. And what was a still more serious consideration to the employers of labour, the labour market was disorganized, owing to the spoiling of the Kaffir by the poison sold him in the form of alcohol. The scenes that often took place between rival gangs of drunken Kaffirs were such as to beggar description, and such as to appear almost incredible to those who have no actual experience of the state of Johannesburg. They used to go for each other with shovels, bludgeons, knobkerries, and weapons of all descriptions, and I have often known of arms and legs being broken in the fray.

Now, while I was in service in the Secret Bureau, the corruption of the liquor traffic had reached such enormous heights in Johannesburg that the authorities in Pretoria determined to take steps in the matter and

bring to book some of their own dishonest officials who were known to be winking at the nefarious practices going on. Following their usual method, they resolved to set spies to watch the conduct of their own agents.

I was accordingly sent for one morning by Mr Lex Goldman. He informed me that a certain Commandant Schutte was suspected by the central authorities of being hand in glove with some of the illicit traffic dealers,

The methods employed by magistrates who wished to get off their accomplices accused of shebeening were somewhat as follows: In many cases when liquor had been taken into the possession of the police and was to be brought into court as evidence of the guilt of the accused it was found, on the actual production of the bottles, etc. before the magistrate, that they had been tampered with in the meanwhile, and that instead of the incriminating liquor they contained nothing but clean cold water. It seems almost incredible that this should be so, but I can quote the experience of a well-known Wesleyan clergyman on the Rand

to prove the fact. In the course of a violent sermon against the corruptions of Johannesburg this clergyman assured his congregation that at a certain notorious shebeen, immediately opposite his church, liquor was being sold illicitly to all and sundry at that particular moment, that its sale was countenanced by corrupt Transvaal officials, and that, even if they went in a body and incriminated the proprietor of the iniquitous resort, his influence with the Transvaal Government was such that, in spite of their unanimous testimony, he would not be convicted, but allowed to go scot-free in the end. The congregation immediately took the clergyman at his word. A deputation, with the parson at its head, left the church when the sermon was over, went straight across to the shebeen, and were able to procure a bottle of spirits. It was tasted by all of them so that they might be able to swear as to the nature of its contents. An information was immediately laid before the authorities and the case was ultimately brought into court, but when the

incriminating bottle of whisky, or whatever it may have been, was produced in evidence of the charge, it was found to contain nothing more serious than cold water. The fact, of course, was that the proprietor of the shebeen was so well in with many of the Transvaal officials that he was able to buy their silence for gold and to have the contents of the bottle changed before it came into court.

The gentleman who was instrumental in bringing this notorious case before the public is a clergyman exceedingly well known in connection with South African affairs, and I may add here an experience of his which throws a strong light upon the way in which the Transvaal has been arming for the last four years. He was travelling in some country district of the Transvaal, and put up for the night at a substantial Boer homestead. As everybody knows, the rural Boers, in spite of their generous hospitality, are somewhat primitive in respect to the sleeping accommodation which they provide for their visitors. Our clergyman, therefore, had perforce to put up

with a bed in the corner of a large sleeping apartment occupied by the whole family. As may be expected, he found it somewhat difficult to sleep under these conditions, and lay awake for a long time. In the middle of the night he saw the old Boer, who was the head of the family, get out of bed and climb up the wall by a ladder leading to a loft above—the ceiling consisting, as in so many Boer homesteads, of nothing but open rafters overlaid perhaps by a few boards here and there. He was so interested by this stealthy action on the part of his host that when the old fellow descended and went to sleep again, he too got out of his bed and climbed up the ladder to see what it was that was hid in that place of concealment. When his head came level with the wall above he saw nothing there but a coffin. That is not such a startling sight in the Transvaal as it might be in a more settled and civilized country, for many of the Boer farmers living, as they do, so far from centres of civilization, have coffins ready in the house in view of any death that may take place in the family.

When our clergyman, therefore, saw the coffin hidden among the rafters he failed to realize that there was anything in that simple fact to make the old Boer get out of his bed in the middle of the night, and ascend to see whether his treasure was safe. But, being determined to investigate the matter further, he raised the lid of the coffin and there he saw a sight that startled him considerably. The coffin was full to the brim of excellent Mauser rifles. What the object of the Boer had been in getting up in the middle of the night to examine them, it would be impossible to say. Knowing that he had an Englishman in the house, he probably wished to see that his treasures were safe. That expedient shows the extent to which the Boers were arming four years before President Kruger launched his ultimatum, and, as I say, it was the clergyman to whom this experience did happen who succeeded in exposing, in a certain notorious instance, the corruption of the Transvaal officials in connection with the liquor traffic.

Now, whether Commandant Schutte had

been up to such tricks as those I have detailed or not I cannot say. All I can say is that I was sent down by Lex Goldman from Pretoria to Johannesburg to spy upon the Transvaal detectives at their work, and to see whether they did their work honestly or not. I went to stay at a private hotel, or boarding-house rather, in Johannesburg, which had no licence for the sale of alcoholic liquor. I bought no drink myself, but I had several underlings along with me who were able to procure drink in the house all day long and as often as they liked. The Johannesburg police were put upon the scent, and an information was laid against the proprietors of the boarding-house. But mark the corruption that prevailed. The case was deliberately bungled, and although the evidence was conclusive as to the illicit sale of liquor the charge was dismissed. One can only conclude that the officials engaged in connection with the case had already been bribed by the defendant, or that he bribed them while the case was going on, to make the matter all right. I was able to report

this matter to Pretoria as a proof of the laxity that prevailed among those charged with the administration of the liquor laws, and was immediately put on by Mr Lex Goldman to investigate some other notorious cases in which policemen and higher officials had been suspected of receiving bribes.

In Fordsburg there was a shebeen kept by a certain Pulinski. I presented myself there one day and asked for a drink, which I was able to procure without difficulty. Pulinski took me inside, where I found the place to be full of Kaffirs. He held me in talk for a long time, and then went away saying that he would return immediately. As he did not come back, however, I went to the door, but to my horror I found it locked. The drunken Kaffirs about began to jeer at and hustle me. I rummaged about to find the means of exit, and in the course of my investigation I discovered a trap-door very cunningly concealed beneath the counter which ran through the middle of the large room. I was directed to this aperture in the floor by the chink of glasses which I heard

almost as it were beneath my feet. I went forward and peered down into the darkness below, and I shall never forget the stench that assailed my nostrils. There, in a kind of cellar or underground den, there were even more Kaffirs than I had seen in the upstairs room, and most of them were already in a state of helpless intoxication. But that was not all. With the Kaffirs were a number of Chinamen of the lowest class lying in bunks and stupid with the effects of opium.

I had now, as I thought, plenty of information to lay before the police authorities and procure a raid upon Pulinski's den. I accordingly put my shoulder to the door, and, after a violent rush or two, succeeded in breaking it open. I went straight to the authorities and told them what I had discovered, but I remember distinctly that they pooh-poohed my information and told me that a great many fellows of my kidney went about discovering mare's-nests in the hope of getting the reward offered to those who should bring intelligence of illicit liquor dealing. The moment I heard this I knew

that Pulinski must have made it all right with the authorities, and that, though the case against him was as plain as it possibly could be, still nothing would be done to his detriment. As a matter of fact, so dilatory were the detectives in setting about an investigation of his premises that, when they did turn up at his establishment, they found that all the drunken Kaffirs and opium-smoking Chinamen had been bundled out of the place, and that all the liquor had been concealed. More than this, they must have talked pretty freely with Pulinski and warned him against me as a spy upon him and them, because when I met him afterwards he swore a great oath that he would be even with me yet.

And it is to this I attribute the very nasty experience that befell me when I investigated the case of another shebeener, Zeinvitch, who had an illicit shop near the City and Suburban Mine. I turned up at Zeinvitch's establishment about half-past four in the afternoon and asked him for a drink. He came outside his door and immediately

threatened to do for me. "Oh!" he said, "I know who you are; you're a damned spy, but you don't play any of your tricks with me." I was able to reassure him, however, or at least I thought I succeeded in doing so by the employment of a good deal of blarney, and the result was that he finally asked me in and gave me a drink. Now, this liquor must have been drugged, as liquor very often is in Johannesburg. Cases are frequent where a man has gone in to a low-class bar, and, after one drink of whisky, has remembered nothing till next morning, when he found himself half-a-mile off, robbed of every valuable in his possession. The drug, whatever it was, did not act upon me quite so rapidly as all that, but a worse thing befell me while I was in the very act of drinking the whisky. I was clubbed from behind. Zeinvitch himself immediately came out in his true colours, and picking up a big ordinary kitchen knife threatened to put it through me. Although I was dazed by the blow on my head, I fought like a demon to get away, and bottles and jars full of things usually sold in a Kaffir

store were smashed and overturned upon the ground—pickles, for example, lime juice, and a huge quantity of kerosene oil. In spite of all my efforts, however, I was dragged into an inner room by Zeinvitch and some of the black bullies who were along with him. Needless to say, I kicked up the very deuce of a row, shouting at the top of my voice and kicking at the walls in the hope of attracting attention to my predicament. While prowling around this apartment trying to get out I noticed a loose board upon the floor and prised it up, in the wild hope of discovering some means of exit. There, again, I found a receptacle stocked with bottles of liquor—the liquor, I may add, sold in these establishments not being of the choicest blends, but Cape smoke of the most villainous description. There was no exit, however, by the floor, neither was there by the window, for it was heavily boarded up, and it was the only aperture in the back of the house. All this time, therefore, I had been rummaging about in comparative darkness, and kicking up, as I say, a tremendous

shindy. Zeinvitch was evidently afraid that the noise I made might attract the attention of the passers-by, because he suddenly rushed into the back room with a chair—not a light cane-bottomed thing, but a piece of furniture made of heavy wood—and brought it down with stunning force upon my head. And then the most appalling thing of all happened. Some of the drunken Kaffirs in the outer room set fire by accident to the kerosene which, during our struggle, we had spilled upon the floor, and the marvel is that, lying there in my dazed and stunned condition, I was not burnt to death. I must have been lugged out of the burning premises somehow. All I can recollect is coming out of my stupor many hundred yards away, to find that I had been robbed by some of Mr Zeinvitch's friends.

As I was unable to get the police authorities in Johannesburg to take action in either of these cases, I went to Pretoria and reported at headquarters. In a personal interview with Commandant Schutte, however, he

deprecated any attempt on my part to interfere with the supervision of the liquor traffic, thinking doubtless that it would be a bad look-out for him should any unpleasant facts about his own connection with that traffic come to light through my endeavours. Remember that Schutte did not know that I personally was in the service of the Secret Bureau. He made a proposal to me, however, which was practically government work similar to that in which I was already engaged. At that time traders were smuggling guns of all kinds into Swaziland with which the natives were being armed, and as naturally this arming could only be a menace to the Transvaal, Schutte wanted me to go down to Swaziland and discover who were the culprits responsible for the introduction of the guns. This, however, I refused to do, and there my official investigation of illicit liquor practices in the Transvaal ended. Nothing definite came of any of the facts which I was able to lay before the Secret Bureau, and the reason of that is not difficult to find. The

reason was that so many of the Transvaal officials were bribed to wink at the illicit practices going on, that every investigation was hushed up, and that, no matter how serious offence might be discovered, an inquiry into it was sure to end in smoke. The central authorities may have reprimanded the detective department for their remissness in not pursuing the cases which I brought before their notice, or they may not. All I can say is that they seemed to be exceedingly well satisfied with my conduct in the cases which I personally investigated for them in Johannesburg.

CHAPTER VII.

DURING my stay in Cape Town after Mr Rhodes had proceeded to England, I still remained in the service of the Transvaal Government, being determined to spoil the Philistine so far as it was possible to do so. All this time, of course, I was still travelling for the firm, the headquarters of which were in Johannesburg. This was my ostensible reason for hurrying hither and thither throughout South Africa, and my profession, or apparent profession, afforded an admirable excuse for the many journeys which I was forced to take on behalf of the Transvaal Government.

Now, I had three adventures during this stay in Cape Town which ultimately had a very pernicious effect upon my relations with the Boer Government. As a matter

of fact, I was not sufficiently discreet to be a spy. Upon three occasions, when my blood was up, I used language in detriment of Paul Kruger and of the Boer oligarchy in general, which I greatly surmise must have been reported to Dr Leyds and the Executive Council, and must have procured my ultimate dismissal from the Secret Service.

It was about this time that I met another agent in Cape Town who, like myself, was supposed to be there for the purpose of sending back to Pretoria information about the number of British troops at that time in South Africa. I am afraid that I myself reported more than once as to the exact state of the garrison; nor did I consider it an unpatriotic thing to do so, because, I reasoned, that if I did not send in this information, there were thousands of others to do so, and thousands of other agencies by which the Executive Council could discover the facts required. As I say, there was another secret servant in Cape Town at that time, either doing the

same work as myself, or, what is still more likely, sent there to spy upon my movements. I met him out one night. He accosted me, and asked me to go and have a drink. I went unsuspectingly, had one whisky and soda, and immediately felt a peculiar giddy drunken sensation, as if I had swallowed some powerful drug. Drugged I undoubtedly had been, because when I awoke I found myself in one of the most notorious gambling hells in Cape Town. Cape Town, I may say, is rife with gambling hells, and, although I do not speak as a prig or a moralist, it seems to me the Cape police are very remiss in the performance of their duty, or a good many of these haunts of vice would be immediately suppressed.

When I awoke that morning I was so dazed at first that I could not immediately realize all that had happened. I put down my hand to my waistcoat pocket to bring out my watch and see what time it was. To my horror I found that my watch—a valuable time-keeper—had disappeared.

I clapped my hands in my pockets, and discovered my purse had gone, together with all the money in my possession. This was over fifty pounds, because, as I say, the Executive Council was most profuse and lavish in the moneys which it sent to its secret agents. The loss of the money and the watch, however, was not the worst. I immediately thrust my hand into a secret inside pocket in which I kept some confidential documents and other compromising letters, and to my horror found that they, too, had gone. I had been in the habit of carrying all compromising documents in a secret pocket in my coat, because, from my experience of the ways of Secret Service officials in South Africa, I knew better than to leave such things in my portmanteau at the rooms at my hotel.

The Secret Service agent who had trapped me and drugged me upon that occasion I never was lucky enough to meet again, or rather he was lucky enough never to meet me. I have no doubt that he reported certain facts, which he found written

in my possession that night, to Pretoria, and I have no doubt that from that day forth my movements were very suspiciously watched, and that certain things were found out which induced the Pretoria gang to believe that I was hoodwinking them then, and had been hoodwinking them during the whole course of our relations.

My second adventure was as follows:

During my stay in Cape Town, at that period, meetings were constantly taking place to protest against the attitude of Mr Schreiner before the Raid Committee which was at that time sitting in the London House of Commons.

Reports of Mr Schreiner's evidence were cabled to Cape Town, of course, and excited the greatest indignation among the ultra members of the patriotic population of South Africa. Meetings were held to protest against this evidence, and reports of these meetings were cabled to London to minimize as much as possible such evil influence as Mr Schreiner's evidence might have. Needless to say, many of these meetings were

very stormy, for some of the wildest spirits among the Dutchmen of Cape Town made a point of attending, kicking up an uproar, and interrupting the patriotic speeches delivered by the British subjects.

Well, at one of these meetings another incident occurred which I am sure helped to bring me into disfavour with the authorities at Pretoria. I was at the back of the hall, where malcontents chiefly gathered; one solitary Englishman among a crowd of hissing and booing Dutchmen. I got rather angry after a time, and lost my temper at a very foul and offensive remark made by a burly Dutchman at my side. Very foolishly, considering the circumstances under which I was present in Cape Town, I protested against the fellow's language. He growled out something offensive, and said he would knock my face off. In a moment a free fight was raging all round us. Other Dutchmen came to his assistance, a violent uproar arose, and before I knew where I was I was hustled out of the hall by the united efforts of the Dutchmen in my vicinity.

Considering the number of Dutch spies everywhere about at that particular time, I am perfectly sure the news of this escapade of mine was communicated to Pretoria, and that that was another of the facts that led to the severance of my connection with the Transvaal Government.

The third scrape into which I fell began, I remember, with a very interesting visit to Robbin Island, the well-known leper settlement in Cape Town Bay.

I got permission from the Commissioner, Mr Pearce, to go over and make a thorough survey of the island, purely from motives of personal curiosity and inquisitiveness, and not at all, of course, with any political design. It is not likely that any man would go to Robbin Island in order to discover political secrets.

The leper ward attracted my attention by the remarkable cleanliness that prevailed. Some of the patients, indeed, seemed to be quite happy. Most of them were black, or parti-coloured, but some of them belonged to the class which is known

as the mean white Dutch. I saw no limbs actually decaying, but I saw a good many people with their limbs wrapped up in what appeared to be swathing bands. The only offensive feature absolutely visible was the huge swollen faces of some of the negro patients. While some of them seemed to be lighthearted and careless enough, others were absolutely apathetic, and stared before them with vague unmeaning eyes. A little white boy died while I was on the island, and it was rather a pathetic sight, I remember, because he was attended by his own father, who was also smitten with leprosy. I was introduced to another young chap on the island who had only been there for a short time. He was said to have plenty of money, and, so far as I could see, had no sign of the deadly complaint visible about his person; but I was assured that leprosy lurked in him somewhere.

Another pathetic incident came to my notice on the occasion of that visit. There was a young Cape Town man on the island who had been engaged to be married to

a very pretty girl before the leprosy actually declared itself. Although, of course, the engagement was thus naturally broken off, the girl refused to be released from her plight, and remained true to her lover in spite of his awful misfortune. She came over periodically from the city to visit him, brought him flowers, delicacies, and other comforts, and I have since heard that she actually became a nurse on the leper settlement in order to be near him, and to tend him to his dying day.

The lepers on Robbin Island are remarkably well treated. A considerable sum of money is set apart for their amusement. Nothing, by-the-by, that has once been used in the place is ever sent out again, so that utensils which have to be repaired, if they cannot be repaired upon the island, are immediately destroyed. Outside one of the establishments, I saw what appeared to me to be a really fine piano, which had been damaged in some way or other I was told, but could not be repaired upon the island, and which, owing to the inexorable

rule, could not be sent to Cape Town. It was therefore to be taken out and sunk in the Bay on the following morning.

I was greatly touched by one sight which I saw while I was strolling about. In front of the leper wards, from which at that moment several patients were staring through the windows, a number of trolleys passed, laden with coffins. It seemed to me to be reducing it too much to a business-like concern, this bringing in of coffins in numbers with a view to future emergencies. To bring them in this way right before the eyes of the patients who were doomed to occupy them within a few months, a few weeks, or perhaps even a few days, seemed to me to indicate a somewhat callous spirit on the part of the authorities, as if they had been accustomed to scenes of misery and death, and had had their finer susceptibilities blunted by the contact.

There is also a lunatic asylum on Robbin Island, and I saw some curious and remarkable sights among the mad patients who were there kept under watch and ward.

I remember several old women, for example, gaunt old creatures, with white frowzy hair hanging down over their faces, shrieking and walking up and down, gibbering like a lot of monkeys, in a yard or coop similar to a chicken run, only larger. One old lady in particular I noticed, walking up and down a line which she had drawn on the ground; first to one end of it and then to the other, never deviating by a hair's-breadth from this route which she had mapped out for herself. And they told me in the asylum that she would do that the whole time she was allowed out, till she was called in again. The moment she went out for exercise in the morning she drew this line. What the idea in her poor old disordered wits may have been nobody could tell, but she seemed to think it was a duty incumbent upon her to draw that line in the dust every day, and march up and down like a sentry, not erect, however, but with bent shoulders, staring at the ground and mumbling to herself.

I had another remarkable adventure with a lunatic before leaving the island. After visiting the wards I strolled down to the seashore. An old gentleman was sweeping there who talked to me quite sensibly, and whom I took at first for one of the servants or officials employed about the place. He was really a man of remarkable intelligence so far as I could see. He talked very good English, and displayed great curiosity and interest about a number of subjects which cropped up in the course of our discussion. As a matter of fact, it appeared to me to be rather strange that a man who was evidently so well informed should be performing such a menial occupation as that of sweeper in the public employ. Incidentally, in the course of our talk, I happened to mention that I had travelled all over South Africa, and knew the Transvaal pretty well. Immediately he broke out with a cunning leer:

"Ah, you can't deceive *me*. I knew all along you were Paul Kruger!" And then he came forward and whispered close to

my ear, with all the cunning of insanity, "Take my tip, my boy. Don't leave this island, Paul; while you are here you are safe. *I* will protect you." The latter words he pronounced with the most grandiose manner, as if there were not the slightest possibility of danger happening to me so long as His Royal Highness was willing to extend me his patronage.

I had heard a great deal about the humours of insanity, and the queer ideas and phantasies often displayed by the insane, but I never had such an opportunity of seeing them at close hand as I had in conversation with this bemuddled old gentleman. Although he had talked so sensibly beforehand, the moment he got on his mad tack, his mind seemed to go all to pieces, and he behaved in quite as insane a fashion as any of the patients whom I had seen up at the asylum. For example, there was a tortoise crawling about, to which I happened to call his attention, in order to divert him, as I thought, from some of the idiotic subjects about which he was babbling.

"Yes," said he, very gravely, "that tortoise is an old friend of mine. Why, I bought that tortoise in Egypt. But I was rather busy at the time, and had a great deal of luggage, and I did not like to carry a tortoise about in my portmanteau, so I left it there; and do *you* know," he said, coming close up to me and talking to me confidentially again, "that tortoise has followed me all over the world. Yes, sir, wherever I go it travels after me. Yes, it has walked all the way from Botany Bay, which is just over there to the left," he said, pointing over his shoulder in the direction of Table Mountain.

I made another desperate attempt to change the conversation.

"What a nice little island this is," I said.

He leered at me.

"Lord bless you," he said, "this isn't Robbin Island. Now, I know what you are thinking of. You think this is Robbin Island where the mad people are, but this is *not* Robbin Island. Robbin Island is the other side of Botany Bay, close to the East

India Docks. Do you know the East India Docks? They are at Poplar."

At that I gave it up as a bad job. I passed down to the landing-stage, where I saw some convicts employed, because a good deal of the work which is done in Robbin Island is done by convicts sent over from the mainland. I took the tug-boat at the landing-stage and left at sundown for Cape Town. There I fell into the third scrape which brought me into bad odour with the Transvaal Government.

I met a couple of Dutchies there, struck up a conversation, and in the course of our talk I happened to say something derogatory to Paul Kruger and to Dr Leyds. They then began to behave in the most violent fashion. Now being a tall and thin individual, and he being a big, overbearing, blustering fellow, he thought he would be able to cow me and do pretty well what he liked with me. He used the most violent and offensive language about England and Englishmen. However, as I knew that it was necessary for me to keep as

quiet as possible in the very invidious position in which I found myself, I put a curb on my temper, and, beyond matching everything which he said about the English with an equally violent attack on my part upon Paul Kruger and the Boers, I refrained from other violence. I suppose I out-talked the beggar in the end, and that he found I had a larger vocabulary of abuse than he had, because I remember that after I had given him plainly to understand that in my opinion most of the Boer officials were liars and thieves, he suddenly ejaculated "Footsack" (I spell it like that, though I really do not know what the correct Dutch way of spelling it is. All I do know is that it is a low Dutch word, meaning "Get out, you cur," and generally applied to a dog or some other brute which you are ejecting from the room, propelling it at the end of your boot).

I told him I would "out" him in a minute or two if he didn't keep a civil tongue in his head; and with that, relying, I suppose, on his own strength and the help of the other

Dutchy who was standing by his side, he sent a huge filthy spittle right in the middle of my face.

I had done a good deal of boxing both before I left England and also after my arrival in South Africa, and I gave him an under cut on the right point of the chin which sent him flying over on his back, and practically stunned him. The other Dutchman flew at me, and before I knew where I was I was surrounded by a number of Cape boys, half-breeds, Zulus, low Dutchmen, all assisting the chap I had knocked to the ground. Others joined in, and in a short time a free fight of very considerable dimensions was raging in Dock Road. I was rapidly getting the worst of it, and was already bruised all over, covered with grime and blood, and the clothes practically torn from my back, when a number of British Tommies, belonging to the English garrison at that time stationed in Cape Town, came up, and saw a fellow Britisher getting the worst of it from a crowd of negroes and Dutchmen. I did not need to shout to them

for assistance; they came on at the run, unslinging their belts as they ran. And then it was "belts, belts, belts" all the way. You could hear the buckle ends clip on the skulls of the negroes and Dutchies, and in a couple of ticks they were flying up the road, the red-coats hunting them in grand style.

Now, I am perfectly certain that my name got to be known in connection with this affair, which made a good deal of stir at the time, that the language which I had used about the Dutch officials was brought under the cognizance of Pretoria, and that this fact, taken in connection with the papers which had been discovered in my possession in the gambling hell, ultimately led to my dismissal.

As a personal experience, by-the-by, I may mention that on still another visit to Robbin Island I ran a very narrow escape of death by drowning.

I had stayed all night upon the island, and was crossing to Cape Town on the tug the following evening. There is sometimes

very rough weather on the bay, and on that occasion, I remember, it took the tug nearly three hours to cross the strait of water between the island and the mainland. Big waves were constantly breaking over the bow, and I, somewhat recklessly, happened to be sitting there on the bulwarks. All at once the tug gave a terrible lurch, and plunged her nose right into the middle of a big wave which broke over the bow and carried me along with it. I gave a yell of dismay as I struck the water, and, owing to the quick racing of the tug past me, I was swept round and very narrowly escaped being entangled in the screw. Luckily, a sailor on the stern had heard the cry which I made when I struck the water, and he threw me a line.

My position was the more dangerous as I am only able to swim a few strokes; and besides this, as everybody knows, the bay is literally swarming with sharks. The latter danger was the more present to my mind, because on the previous day I had gone out fishing from Robbin Island, and had actually caught a number of baby sharks myself.

However, owing to the quickness of the sailor on the stern, who had apprehended the danger in which I was, I was pulled on board before anything untoward could occur.

Now, as everybody will see who reads this narrative carefully, I do not wish to assert for a moment that all the scoundrelism of South Africa was in the service of the one side only. As a matter of fact, there were quite as many desperadoes ready to assist the South African League as there were to assist Paul Kruger and his gang. In connection with my political work in Cape Town I got into touch with a good many of the wildest spirits on the British side, and belonged to a small Secret Society which met at an office in Plein Street. I had become a member of this Secret Society in the course of my general knocking around, and looked upon it rather as a wild romantic affair, as an excuse for drinking and looking mysterious, than as anything very serious. I had attended several meetings already, when one night I was very much undeceived by a conversation which took place in my presence.

We have seen that a proposal was entertained, to say the least of it, by the Transvaal Government for the removal of Mr Cecil Rhodes, and here you will see that a proposal was mooted among some men in Cape Town for removing certain officials of the Transvaal, Dr Leyds among the number. I was naturally considerably flabbergasted when this proposal was broached to the assembly, and immediately rose and said: "If this is the kind of talk you are going in for, I mean to make myself as scarce as possible. I do not like that sort of thing." For a considerable time after this I abstained from attending the meetings.

One morning when putting on my coat I thrust my hand into my pocket and discovered a missive. It had not been sent me through the post, but placed there over night by some tool of the Secret Society. This was a notice warning me that my presence was requested in the office in Plein Street, not the next night but the night following that.

When I got into the room twelve men

were sitting round the table. They were not all armed with revolvers, but a good many had revolvers lying in front of them ready on the table. I was given very plainly to understand that having once entered into this affair and become cognizant of the wild schemes and plans of the desperadoes, I could not possibly draw back at the eleventh hour. It seemed that I knew too much already. I was told that in case the lot should fall to me to go to Pretoria and do some of this murderous work I should have to take my chance with the rest. I may say that it all seemed to me to be a wild-cat scheme, and to have not too much practical significance. For the Anglo-Saxon always makes a bad assassin. However, I considered it my duty to apprise Dr Leyds of the danger that threatened him, and danger did threaten him, I believe, for I heard afterwards that he had received a package which contained a bomb that luckily proved abortive.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHORTLY after the experience related in the last chapter, I was ordered back to Pretoria to receive some further instructions from the Transvaal Government. I spent about a month in Johannesburg, still bluffing them to the best of my ability, sending in all kinds of faked letters about this, that, and the other affair, which was taking place throughout South Africa, and (speaking generally) drawing pretty freely on my imagination for information in return for gold.

I had a very good time for about a month in Johannesburg, and was then sent to Pretoria, where I had an interview with Mr Lex Goldman, and was again despatched by him to Cape Town to learn everything that was going on.

I saw the send-off of Lord Rosemead from

South Africa, and the arrival of Sir Alfred Milner, but, owing to the tremendous crush in the streets at his reception, I could not get more than a glimpse of him. I saw him afterwards, however, at a race meeting which he was attending.

Very little happened after I went down to Cape Town. The Boers had discovered by this time, I suppose, that I had been bluffing them all the time, for I had a letter informing me that within a month from that date they would dispense with my further services. When this month had elapsed, I returned to Johannesburg and entered the service of one of the largest importing houses in the whole of South Africa. While in their employ I was horrified one day by an interview with a well-known detective in the Fountain Hotel. He came to me and said: "By-the-by, you know Blank," naming the individual whom I had introduced to the Transvaal authorities, and who, as I afterwards discovered, had been taken into their employ and given a billet in the Secret Intelligence Department. It seemed that during my

absence in Cape Town this Mr Blank had been indulging in all kinds of nefarious practices. He had succeeded in embezzling a sum of money, and had been convicted of a fraud, and had on that account been dismissed from the service of the Transvaal Government. He afterwards turned up at Pretoria, where he immediately proceeded to pay his attentions to a very wealthy lady, a Dutch citizeness. She was greatly captivated by his manner and appearance, and from time to time advanced him large sums of money, because he assured her he was well in with the Transvaal Government, and only needed a little money in order to bring off some large scheme which should make his fortune. But one fine morning he suddenly disappeared with all her belongings, with a good deal of her money, her dresses, her jewels, and other valuables. He got through to Delagoa Bay, and from there escaped to Australia.

Now, after a time I had come to see through the schemes of this disreputable acquaintance of mine pretty well, and latterly

had had no connection with him whatsoever. He was always proposing abominable schemes to make money out of the various authorities in Pretoria. One gigantic scheme of his, I remember, was to steal certain papers from the Government Buildings, papers of very great importance, and then, when a large reward was offered for their recovery, to volunteer his services to the Transvaal Government, with a view to finding them out, to represent that he had had great difficulties in doing so, and then, by finally presenting them successfully to Mr Lex Goldman's office, claim the money offered for their restoration.

This scheme of his was not so preposterous as, on the face of it, it appears to be, because I may point out that a good many of the clerks in the War Office were men of British descent, and although apparently perfectly loyal to the Transvaal authorities, still easy enough to get at by anybody from the outside who was able to distribute a little gold amongst them. Probably my acquaintance, Mr Blank, therefore, would have been

able, if he had so wished to do, to purloin the papers which he mentioned.

I told him, however, that I would have nothing to do with the scheme, and that if he did proceed with it I should immediately report the matter to Government quarters, and even at the risk of exposure to my own name I should have been prepared to give evidence against him. I thus had no complicity with this scheme whatsoever. However, all this was of very little avail, it seemed, with the Johannesburg detective put on to approach me after Mr Blank's disappearance. He knew that it was I who had introduced him to the Transvaal authorities, and he seemed to think that I must know all about the plans in which he had been engaged. I pointed out, however, that when I did introduce him to the Transvaal authorities I explained to them he was a man already of a somewhat disreputable past, and that I would not be answerable for any of his actions. I suppose the detective was able to verify this by reference to the central authorities; at any

rate, I was troubled no more about the matter.

I may mention, by-the-by, that a good many of the servants of the Transvaal Government, whose characters were very similar to that of Mr Blank, are now scattered throughout the British Empire, in consequence of Lord Roberts's occupation of the Transvaal, and only the day before I wrote these words I met one of them face to face in Holborn.

Although I had been dismissed from the service at Cape Town, and had returned to Johannesburg, it seemed that the authorities still imagined that I could render them service in the matter of discovering secrets, and I was sent for one day in regard to the following matter. There was a certain officer in the Transvaal service who, they informed me, was suspected to be in British pay. Information had been sent to them that he was making clandestine drawings of the forts, and preparing plans of the country all round Johannesburg. He may have been doing this, of course, in

the service of the Transvaal Government, but the suggestion seemed to be that he was sending duplicates of these plans and drawings out of the country, for the service of the British authorities. It was proposed to me, merely as an isolated job, and not as part of any regular employment in the Secret Bureau, that I should do my best to obtain these papers. If I could procure all the papers in his possession they were, they said, prepared to give me a large amount of money.

I had some difficulty for a considerable time before meeting this officer. I was in Pretoria for several weeks, went on to Johannesburg, and then went into the Free State, where I found he then was. At last I met him at Jaggersfontein, in the Free State. I told him who I was, and warned him that if he really was in the service of the British Government he had better take the greatest care, because his Boer masters were already beginning to entertain suspicions with regard to his conduct. I offered him half of the large sum of money

that had been given me, and told him that if he would clear all his valuable papers out of his room, I thought I might be able to serve both him, myself, and the British Government by a single stroke of business. When his really valuable papers had disappeared, I proposed to enter his premises, find such non-compromising documents as were left, and send them to the Transvaal authorities, reporting that this was all I had been able to discover.

He agreed to this plan of mine, agreed to abstract all the compromising documents in his possession, and to be absent from his rooms in the hotel in which he stayed at a certain period of the day. During this period I should burgle his rooms. I got into a considerable amount of trouble on that account. He had foolishly locked his door on going out, and I found that I could not enter his room without creating a disturbance. However, I procured a key-hole saw, and began to cut out the lock. Although his room opened on a somewhat unfrequented corridor, I must have made

some noise, or must have been accidentally discovered in some other way, because, just as I was engaged in busily sawing at the door, up came the proprietor. He did not know me, because I myself was not a visitor at his hotel. He rushed up and called for help. I stammered out a great many very ineffectual excuses. The police were sent for, but, luckily, just as we were waiting for their arrival, up came the officer himself. He evidently thought that the whole thing had been blown upon, and refused to come to my assistance except in the most perfunctory way. All he said was that he refused to prosecute, provided I paid for the damage I had done to the door, and left the town.

The Transvaal authorities seemed to think that I had committed a fraud upon them in this matter, and I was informed that I must remain on their side of the frontier, and that any attempt on my part to cross the border would be stopped at once. As I had no intention whatever of leaving the Transvaal at that particular

time, but was engaged in the business which I had taken up on my return to Johannesburg, I remained quite willingly, but always in a wretched state of suspense as to what might happen any day, and while in this state of suspense I was again sent for, and told by Mr Lex Goldman that British emissaries in disguise were coming into the country as fast as they possibly could. He told me that private individuals were settling in the Transvaal who were really soldiers, and were prepared to rise at any moment and assist the British Government in their designs on the independence of the Boers. I asked him how they knew. He said they had had information to that effect, and that they believed it, because if they could get in adventurers from Europe to be in readiness for a possible war with England, surely England could do the same, surely she could be planting in Johannesburg men who, while ostensibly civilians, were really prepared to take up arms on behalf of the English Government. He wanted me to find out the facts about this, but as

I was doing very well at my business at that time, I adopted an independent tone, and told him that it seemed to me that, while they had shunted me so far as general employment went, they wanted me to do all kinds of dirty work against my own countrymen, and that I had a very good mind to expose them. Goldman looked at me in a peculiar fashion, and said:

"You will do nothing of the sort, and if you take my advice you won't try either."

CHAPTER IX.

I REMAINED in the service of my employers practically till the beginning of the war, when I volunteered with one of the irregular regiments raised in Natal, and fought in all the battles prior to and during the siege of Ladysmith. But before I mention that, I should like to say a few words about my experiences with Von Veltheim, the murderer of Woolf Joel, whom I happened to meet at Delagoa Bay.

A man can only speak of another man as he finds him, of course, and though I know considerable animus has been excited against Von Veltheim, and he has been represented as a cold-blooded murderer, I can only say this, that there are queer rumours about South Africa which tend to make out that there was a good deal

in connection with that tragedy which did not come to the surface. I will say no more about this subject here, but those who are in the know will understand perfectly well what I mean. To me, at least, Von Veltheim appeared to be a very decent fellow and a very genial companion.

He is a tall, dark German, a remarkably good talker, a vehement politician, always exceedingly well dressed, but inclining somewhat to the loud style, with a great profusion of jewellery.

I had several talks with him at Delagoa Bay, on my way to Natal. On one occasion, I remember, he used the following words, which cast a somewhat curious light upon the murder of Mr Woolf Joel: "Woolf Joel," said he, "was something of a man if you like, but Harold Strange, ach, bah!" and he made a gesture of infinite contempt.

At this time the hotel in which Von Veltheim was staying was burnt to the ground, and I remember seeing him sitting in the street, dressed in nothing but pyjamas. All his effects had been burnt in the hotel.

It was infinitely comic, the way in which he talked of his misfortune. Although he speaks fluent English, he has a pretty strong German accent, of course, and this is something like the way in which he ran on:

"Here am I, vis no boots, no trousers, no vaistcoat, no jacket, no collar, no anysing, and yet they will say that it was I who burned down the whole place. Oh, yes! They will say it was I. Von Veltheim was staying there, and that is enough. He is a scoundrel. Poor Von Veltheim! Wherever he goes and whatever bad is done, he is the one to do it. Oh, yes! Oh, yes!" Somewhat in this manner he ran on, in the most lugubrious fashion, sitting in the street in his pyjamas, and a very comical figure to look at.

When the war broke out, as I say, I enlisted in one of the best known of the irregular forces of Natal, was sent up to Ladysmith, and took part in all the battles connected with the siege.

My first knowledge of actual warfare

was gained at Elandslaagte. What struck me particularly, I remember, was the efficiency, regularity, and military precision with which the troops were moved out to action on that eventful day. The artillery and cavalry, I remember, moved out from Ladysmith to the scene of battle, and some of us began to wonder how the infantry could possibly advance to their support, or rather to co-operate with them. But the difficulty was solved in a trice. There was plenty of rolling stock present in Ladysmith. We boarded the train, rattled out to the scene of action, and the moment the doors were open the soldiers began to spread out in skirmishing order.

I myself was under shell fire, and for a certain portion of the day under a fairly heavy rifle fire, but was not seriously engaged during the battle. The squadron to which I was attached was deputed to support a portion of the field artillery. I remember being impressed by the splendid way in which our guns silenced the guns of the Boers, and remember particularly,

also, that it was a matter of frequent comment in the British camp that Colonel Scheil, the German artillerist in the Boer employ, had served his guns most pluckily, standing by them to the last.

Of course, when I relate my experience about the various actions in which I took part in Natal, I wish to emphasize the fact that a private individual fighting in an action is in practically the worst place, of any man concerned, to get a general idea of what is going on. An officer stationed at a distance and directing a considerable body of men, or a war correspondent, who from some height can survey the whole plain of action, may possibly have an accurate general idea of a modern battle. But even of that I have very considerable doubts. In reading reports of an action sent home by correspondents, one would sometimes think, from the language employed, that the whole scene of action had been lying bare to the brilliant gentleman's vision. All I can say is that that is not so. A modern battle comprises such a large extent of

ground, and is so confused in its details, that I think very few of the men present can have any accurate general idea of what is going on. All I can say is, that although I fought in seven or eight battles in Natal, all I saw of each action, and all I shall relate here, was what happened in my immediate vicinity.

One of the most vivid things that happened to me during the whole campaign was my experience on the night of the battle of Elandslaagte. We bivouacked close to the railway station, and a store-keeper there, I remember, allowed us to make ample use of his stores in the matter of food and refreshment. We built a huge bonfire, really a tremendous affair, that flamed up in the dark, dark, drizzling night, and to him who had had no previous experience of warfare it was a most thrilling and interesting sight to see the bronzed faces of soldiers, all wet by the constant drizzle of the rain, and gleaming red in the glare of the bonfire. Round this enormous pile of blazing material a motley group of Tommies

gathered, of all sorts and sizes, of all kinds and descriptions, and wearing every species of uniform. And there you could see us drinking beer, eating sardines, munching bread, singing songs, and campaigning in the most free and easy fashion, as if we had been accustomed to it for a score of years. Probably, indeed, we had more gusto in the occasion than veterans would have done, for it was the newness of it, the excitement, the freshness of the adventure, the sense of a victorious day behind us, the sense of an enemy still around, the great bonfire flashing up red amid the darkness—I say it was the general effect of all these things coalescing together that made that one of the most thrilling, and to me personally, one of the most vivid nights of the whole of my career.

That night, I remember, I was forced to sleep in a shed to escape from the drizzling rain, and the shed was so firmly packed with humanity that the soldiers were practically sleeping on the top of each other. Although it had been very jolly outside

before we turned in, it was anything but jolly or comfortable now, and I hope I shall never pass a more uncomfortable night in my life than I did then. The snores of those stolid Britishers, who seemed to be able to sleep under the most unfavourable conditions, the peculiar smell of the wet clothes, and the rank smell which always characterizes Tommies on the field, the filth and grime and absence of personal cleanliness that was inevitable after a day spent among mud and gunpowder and rain, the fœtor and the stifling rank heat of the place, all these made existence unbearable. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that I rose early in the morning, before dawn had yet appeared, and stumbled out into the darkness.

I shall never forget the ecstasy of the first clean, great chestful of pure, delicious air that I sucked in through open mouth and open nostrils. One breathed it in as if it were a kind of airy wine.

One thing I noticed about all my sensations during the Natal Campaign, and that

was that one's physical senses seemed to be sharpened. Smells and sounds that at other times would pass almost unnoticed, during those eventful months, owing perhaps to the tensity of one's nerves, struck one with enormous vividness, and thus remained impressed for ever on the memory. To breathe a full, clean draught of fresh air after a hot, disagreeable and stifling night, is a common enough experience, and, in other circumstances, would be passed by me practically unnoticed, but, as I say, the first breath of fresh air which I drew in that morning, when I issued from the shed in which I had been lying with so many hundreds of sweating Tommies, was to me one of the most delicious, one of the most thrilling, and one of the most vivid sensations in the whole of my life.

The misty darkness gradually withdrew from the face of the field, and before we were ordered back to Ladysmith I had an opportunity of seeing some part of the battle-field of yesterday. One very remarkable sight which I saw was two Boers lying close

together transfixed by the same lance, the entrails of one of them protruding. They had evidently both been trying to escape upon the same horse, one mounted behind the other in the saddle, when a pursuing Lancer thundered on behind them, and, by the impetus of his steed and the strength of his own arm, had run them both through together.

As everybody knows, a tremendous number of horses and ponies had been captured from the Boer forces at the battle of Elandslaagte. A great many of these were taken possession of by our Tommies, and it was a very curious spectacle to see all kinds of soldiers, kilted and otherwise, lugging ponies along with them back from the seat of action. Some of these were brought back into Ladysmith, and I remember hearing some townspeople exclaim, when a number of riderless steeds were passing them: "Oh, poor fellows, they have been killed and their saddles are empty!" This sympathy was wasted, however, for the very horses in question were horses

which had not belonged to us, but which had been taken from the Boers, and which were so plentiful, indeed, after the action was over, that Tommies went about selling them for the little comforts which they had not been able to procure for a number of weeks at the front. Since I have returned to England it has been told to me that a report appeared in the papers that a Highlander sold a remarkably good horse for one cigarette. I am unable to match that, but I can corroborate it in some degree by an experience that happened to myself. I happened to have laid my hands on a Boer pony, which I immediately swopped to a fellow that came along for a packet of cigarettes. Irregular looting of this kind was frowned down after a time. Whether it was this fact that stopped it, or the fact that we had no such very successful engagements afterwards, whatever the reason that put an end to our privileges of looting, there were no scenes afterwards such as those I witnessed immediately after Elandslaagte.

The next action in which I was engaged was the battle of Modder Spruit, or, to give it the other name by which it is known, of Tintanyani Hill. Tintanyani, by-the-by, in the Kaffir dialect means "the birds fly high," and is a striking instance of the unconscious poetry which is often displayed in Kaffir nomenclature. The Basutos, for example, in some of their names display the most vivid sense of natural beauty, and of the significance of natural phenomena. To anybody who has seen the heights of Tintanyani, the native epithet "the birds fly high" must seem remarkably appropriate.

My personal recollections of the battle on that day are as follows:—

We had ridden out from Ladysmith, I remember, and when we drew near to the scene of action, the order was suddenly given, "Right about," and it flashed across my mind, not without a sense of relief, that there was to be no battle that day, but that we were to return at once to Ladysmith. However, the comrade who was riding beside me suddenly said:

"My God, look at that; we are in for it to-day." And, on looking round, I saw long columns of khaki-clad infantry creeping up the ridges of the hill like a huge serpent reaching gradually forward across the ground. Just at that moment I heard a sound above my head which sounded like "hooff," and, never having heard a shell pass through the air near me before, I turned and asked, "What is that?" "Shut up, you damned fool," said an officer; "you will have thousands of those about your ears before we are through with this business."

We trotted forward to the scene of action, were ordered to dismount, to cross a flat, and storm our way up a small hill from which we might be able to direct a heavy fusillade upon the heights of Tintanyani. It was on this occasion that I became particularly conscious of what a young soldier fears the first time he goes into battle. As a matter of fact, many of us were seized with violent physical pains as we crossed the deadly flat which we had to traverse, with the bullets saying "pstt," "pstt" in the dust all around us. One's knees

felt waggly beneath one, and you thought that if they got a little weaker you would be sure to flop upon the ground. Still, every time a man was tumbled over by a bullet you seemed to be conscious of an ever-increasing weakness at the sight, and yet in spite of this feeling of lassitude creeping over you, you were still able to stagger forward blindly, dumbly, groping almost, the head down and the lips hanging slack.

There was a terrible barbed wire fence running right across the middle of the very extensive flat which we had to cross, and, I remember, there was a good deal of confusion and trouble and irregularity in the ranks while we were forcing our way through the fence. One's feeling at that fence was curious. I was conscious of a weak and febrile and petty irritation at the damned thing, as I called it to myself. I wanted to strike at it. I seemed to ask weakly, why is it here, keeping a fellow back when he is running under cover, when the bullets are flopping all round about him, and when every moment is

precious if he means to save his skin? One seemed to regard the fence as a personal enemy, and, as I say, my unconscious impulse was to strike at the beastly thing, to kick it, to make it suffer in some way or other if I possibly could.

I wish to emphasize the fact that this was the first serious experience of our particular corps under fire, and that after a time, when we were more habituated to the incidents of war, we became practically callous, and viewed dangers of this kind with indifference. But I do not believe for a moment those bragging fellows who tell you that they were as cool as a cucumber the first time they went into action. After a time I, too, came to consider danger as all in the day's work, and on that day and on all other days when you could see an enemy actually before you, and could get at him, it seemed to be all right; but if you happened to be retreating from a position under heavy fire, or to be crossing the open where you were spat at by the bullets of the hidden enemy, well, to put it bluntly, it took the nerve out of a man.

Afterwards, as I say, it was not so bad, but my experience and the experience of every member of my corps crossing that deadly flat beneath Tintanyani Hill was such as I have described.

When we reached the foot of the height which we had been ordered to storm and occupy, every one of us was blown. We had now reached cover of a sort, and we could there throw ourselves upon the ground utterly exhausted and panting. Remember that we were not regulars, but a purely volunteer force, and only a few weeks enrolled, and that, consequently, many of us were in a somewhat flabby condition, not at all fit and well exercised for war. Ultimately, however, we did wriggle up the hill, rushing from boulder to boulder, blazing away at the Boers posted on the opposite heights.

When this action was over we returned to Pepworth's Farm, which had been looted by the Boers. They had not been able to carry off all the provisions, however, and some of us were able to make a very hearty

meal. But one very disgusting feature of their occupation had been the amount of filth which they had left about the place. One did not object so much to their breaking into stores, stealing sardines, wines, whiskies, fruit, and other necessaries of life, but it seemed gratuitous brutality to besmear the place with filth as they had done.

I remember no other incident in the battle of Tintanyani Hill which is worth mentioning to my English readers, and the next action in which I was engaged, and in which some interesting incidents befell me, was the fight of Lombard's Kop.

In this action, as everybody knows, owing to a disaster which had taken place in another portion of the field, the British Army was forced to fall back upon Ladysmith, and evacuate the position which it had occupied. During this withdrawal we were exposed to a very severe rifle fire on the part of the enemy. But even earlier in the day I myself personally had been subjected

to considerable danger. I was in charge of the ammunition, and a request came back to me from my companions at the front to send forward a further supply of ammunition to replenish the exhausted cartridge belts. The man who is in charge of the ammunition supply is expected to render an account of every cartridge which he gives out. You can guess my feelings, therefore, when I discovered that the ammunition which I had sent forward to my own corps had been bagged by another regiment which also found their supply of ammunition had run out, and which had collared that sent forward by my bearers. The result was that a further desperate appeal came from my comrades at the front, asking me in the name of God to send forward ammunition at once.

Now, two heavy wallets of ammunition would weigh about as much as a hundred and twenty pounds, and, owing to the bad nature of the foot-hold possible, and the rocky nature of the soil, the men who carried this ammunition from the ammunition cart

forward to the firing line were forced to stop every few seconds and rest their burdens on the great rocks lying around the pathway. However, when that last desperate appeal came to me to forward ammunition at once, I determined personally to carry it forward to the firing line. I have already said that every physical capacity and function of a man seems to be enhanced and intensified under the stimulus of war. I know not how it is, but certainly the fact remains that I, who am a man making no pretensions to any great physique, carried a hundred and twenty pounds of ammunition right forward to the firing line without once resting or pausing by the way.

All, however, was of no avail. It was seen by the General in command to be necessary to retire at once upon Ladysmith, and we withdrew at once from the positions which we had occupied. No sooner did we begin to withdraw than the Boers crept forward among the rocks, and possessed themselves of the evacuated position, from which they proceeded to pour in a deadly

fire upon the retreating forces of the British. During this fire several of my comrades fell, and it was a deadly thing to hear the curious loose flop of their bodies as they walloped and went over on the ground close by our sides. That sound of a body falling in warfare is another of the physical sensations I experienced in Natal that remains vividly imprinted on my memory. It seems to be quite unlike the sound of a body falling in everyday life. Whether it is absolutely unlike it or not I do not know. It may be that the curious intense feeling always present in a battle, as if you were moving through some weird kind of mirage, it may be that this renders all physical happenings curiously different from what they are in ordinary life. But I think that is not the only reason. I think that the sound of a body falling in battle when struck to the death by a bullet has a quality of its own, quite distinguished from that of a live body falling through an accident in everyday life. It goes down with a curious flop, as if it had all tumbled together and sunk upon the

ground, in the vulgar phrase, like a sack of potatoes.

When night fell I was among the party that volunteered to go out with the ambulances to look for our dead among the rocks. It was very curious drawing near to the firing line of the Boers in the armistice which had been established between the two forces for the time being. It seemed as if we had been playing a game somehow, as if the game were over for the moment, and as if we could shake hands and have done, meeting each other in the most friendly fashion, and hobnobbing for the time being, but always with the deadly consciousness that we might be cutting each others' throats in the morning.

As we wended our way among the rocks in the darkness, this state of affairs gave me, at least, a most curious feeling of unreality, and of warfare as something bizarre and even grotesque. It seemed to me to be so curious that we should be going out there and meeting Boers in the most friendly fashion, even procuring their assistance to

help us in finding our dead and our wounded, and at the same time to have been doing our best only a few hours before to blow them into eternity, and even then to be ready at a few hours' notice to blow them into eternity again.

All emotions of this kind such as are incidental to a man upon the battlefield are exceedingly obscure and complicated, and it is somewhat difficult for a man of no literary training like myself to express them in such a simple and straightforward fashion as shall prove their truth and authenticity to all. At the same time, the number of thoughts, ideas, and obscure sensations that throng through a man's mind, or rather, not through his mind merely, but through his whole being, corporeal and mental, in the course of a day's fighting, and above all in the night that precedes a day's fighting, and the night that follows a day's fighting, is so great, and the sensations and feelings themselves are so extraordinary and so complex, that a transcript of them, thoroughly written out by an artist in language, who had actually taken

part in the campaign, would prove one of the most vivid and most enthralling books ever written in the world.

To revert, however, to the actual facts and actual experiences which befell me that night when I went out with the ambulance party to the Boer lines. It was curious as we drew near the Transvaalers to hear voices addressing us in perfectly good English:

"Hullo, old chaps, coming out to hunt for your men, eh? Let's give you a hand."

Naturally enough we had not too much time to waste with our kindly hosts for the time being, but it was really curious to see men who had been trying to shoot each other, drinking out of each other's bottles and even partaking of coffee from the same pot. I can vouch and testify that this is what happened to me that night. I was offered tobacco by some of the bearded Boers who were sitting in a circle round a camp fire of theirs. Some very warm and very comforting coffee was prepared, and I was given a good swill of it, just as if I had been one of their own men.

They volunteered to come out and help us, as I say, in hunting for our wounded, and one of them seemed particularly anxious to attach himself to me. I thought he was up to something, but did not venture to talk freely or to question him until we had got off by ourselves and were searching about among the rocks, out of earshot of all the others. And then he revealed to me the secret of all his trouble. It seemed that he was a man of English descent, who had settled in the Transvaal, and who (or whose father) had become a naturalized burgher and a subject of Paul Kruger, and as such, of course, he had been commandeered to serve with the Boer forces in the field against men of his own flesh and blood. I may state here that I, of my own personal knowledge, know there were many cases where men bearing British names and of British descent fought, in some cases willingly, but still more often unwillingly, against their fellow Britishers in the field. Some of these are descendants of British deserters who, in former times and in former wars, have deserted from our own Army

and escaped into Transvaal territory. These deserters often married Boer women, and their offspring have learned the Boer language, look upon themselves as Dutchmen in every way, and in many cases are the most inveterate enemies of England. It is a curious thing to hear Joneses and Morgans and Browns and Smiths and Mackenzies using the most bitter and virulent language against Great Britain and Britons in general.

Well, to come back to my particular companion that evening. He was one of the British subjects of the Transvaal Government who was not a willing accomplice in the conspiracy to drive the British out of South Africa. But he would have been liable to be shot if he had not consented to accompany the Boer forces to the field. Men of English descent and English speech who happened to be burghers of the Transvaal were always liable to be looked upon with suspicion, and the slightest hesitation on their part would have rendered their case desperate indeed. It was a knowledge of this that had rendered my new-found friend willing to fight against

us at Elandslaagte, Tintanyani, and Lombard's Kop, but he told me that his mental disquietude was such at the unfortunate predicament in which he found himself that he sometimes felt inclined to blow out his brains. He was a man of exceedingly fluent speech, with a tremendous gift of description, and I remember the way in which he described his horror at this fratricidal war impressed me tremendously as he spoke. He said that every time he pulled his trigger he had a kind of feeling as if he were a murderer. Sometimes the mere excitement of animal conflict led him to forget the sense of bloodguiltiness which was always his at other times. When the guns were going off all around him he said: "I just feel that I want to fight as an animal. I do not care. As a matter of fact, I do not think at all; I simply load and fire as if I were a kind of automatic machine wound up for the occasion. But in the pauses of the fight the thought always comes back and stings me that I am fighting against my own side. And when night comes it is especially terrible. When the

other chaps are sleeping I go about thinking 'I am a traitor, I am a traitor,' and it is then I feel tempted to slip a bullet through my brains."

Another battle of which I retain a very vivid recollection was the action at Bester's Farm. On this occasion the force to which I was attached came by accident under fire of another regiment in the field. I may say that owing to the same higgledy-piggledy nature of the terrain and of the whole scheme of operations in Natal, this firing of friends upon friends was a much more frequent occurrence than is generally believed. Personally, for example, I know of one officer who was shot through the back by his own men. One hears of this sometimes happening in Indian frontier warfare, where an officer has made himself unpopular, and where a private takes his revenge by actually shooting one of his own leaders from behind, but certainly that was not the case with regard to the particular officer I mention. He was a man most popular with all classes in the field, and we were horrified when we found him lying

on his face with a bullet that had gone in through his back. He had been accidentally shot by one of his own men.

Well, on this occasion that I mention, the battle of Bester's, one of the Natal irregular regiments actually came under fire of another body of irregulars posted on a hill on the other side of a valley. We had no signals with us, and I, with some others, was immediately despatched from the one station to the other to tell the men what they were doing, to assure them that we were not Boers, and to beg them to turn their rifles in another direction. I need scarcely say that this job proved anything but acceptable to me. To carry despatches under fire is bad enough, but when you carry despatches you are not approaching the enemy, you merely run the risks that any exposed individual must run upon a battlefield. To carry a message, however, to a body of men which happens to be firing on the very body of men which you have just left, and to cross the intervening space with a horrible suspicion in your mind that they must think you all

the time to be an enemy, is a very nerve-harassing experience indeed. You may judge of my relief, therefore, when I met some signallers on the way before I had proceeded very far who undertook to convey the message to the irregulars on the adjoining ridges. This was done, the blunder corrected, and I returned to my own quarters in safety.

I was also among those who went up Gun Hill with Sir Archibald Hunter on the night that we finally put Long Tom out of action. I know very little of the splendid midnight adventure, however, beyond the fact that I went up the hill and went down again. The only vivid recollection that comes back to my mind is that I heard somebody shout out from the height above us as we advanced, "Fix bayonets and charge." I was considerably flabbergasted at this order, because I knew we had no bayonets, and it did not occur to me at the moment that this was merely a ruse to frighten the Boers, who have a morbid horror of anything in the shape of cold steel. The ruse was eminently

successful, and I remember afterwards some Engineers going forward and blowing out the breech block of Long Tom which had pestered Ladysmith for so long by his unwelcome attentions.

It is not for me to relate in wearisome detail all that befell us during the wearisome siege of Ladysmith. One thing that I particularly noticed was the apathy which gradually spread itself, not only among all ranks of the fighting force, but also among the townsfolk and the civilians, with regard to the Boer shells. So many tons of ammunition were fired into the town with absolutely no effect whatever, that the people became quite callous after a time to the Boer artillery. They walked about the streets paying no attention whatever to the shells, and if a man was killed in any street it came rather as a matter of surprise, as something unexpected, than as anything else. It was looked upon pretty much as English people at home look upon a man being killed by lightning. That is to say, it was a kind of thing that might happen to anyone, but it

happened so infrequently that it was really hardly worth while bothering one's head about it. So careless, as a matter of fact, did the people become about the Boer artillery that it had to be made a punishable offence if people did not take shelter when they knew that shells were being thrown into the town.

One of the most terrible days, of course, during the whole siege of Ladysmith, was the desperate Boer attack, ordered by President Kruger himself I believe, upon Cæsar's Camp and Waggon Hill. It is perhaps not generally known that the line of defence round Ladysmith was so extensive that every man who could possibly carry a rifle was expected to take his place in the firing line, and, as a matter of fact, I saw men who could scarcely stagger from the effects of sickness and hunger, tottering forward with their comrades to repel the Boer assault on that terrible day. I myself was in action from three o'clock in the morning, and fought for fifteen hours under a blazing sun, with no sustenance whatever

except a little water and a scrap of biscuit. Remember that at this time our rations had been reduced to a bit of biscuit now and again, and a scrap of rotten horse flesh. And it was when emaciated by such a diet as this that we were called upon to repel the daring attack of the Boers.

The whole day, to look back upon it now, seems like a hideous dream. The Boers broke in upon our lines three times and were three times driven out again. All I remember about the fight in a general way is that I seemed to be shouting and firing all day long: and I remember at night there was a most appalling pain in the back of my neck, produced by my lying flat upon the ground and raising my head to take accurate aim along the barrel of my rifle and to fire. The agony caused by this unnatural posture was excruciating, and did not disappear for several days.

As everybody knows, it was a splendid charge made by the Devons at the end of the day that finally swept the Boers out of the last point of vantage which they had

seized, and finally freed us from all possibility of the seizure and surrender of Ladysmith.

The night that followed was terrible in its discomfort, and so far as I myself am concerned it was a good thing for me that I had been so long without sleep and had been exposed to such terrible exertions, because the fatigue thus super-induced made me fall asleep in a very short time, and so forgot my misery. The day ended in a perfect torrent of rain just as the fight was finishing, and we staggered back to camp soused to the skin, starving with hunger, without a drop or dreg of rum to drink, and with nothing, as I say, but a piece of biscuit and a bit of bad meat to satisfy our gnawing hunger.

On the morning after the fight the field in the immediate neighbourhood of the two main assaults of the Boers presented a terrible spectacle. I myself saw some Boers blown to a pudding, scarce a vestige of humanity remaining, except three disfigured heads and a hand or two lying in a grey dirty red-streaked puddle of shattered flesh

and bone. One horrid feature of the battle-field, I remember, was that owing to the rocky nature of the soil dead Boers in some cases had dropped into, or been blown into, crevices, and were therefore not discovered by the fatigue parties until several days afterwards, when the offensive smell guided us to their improvised graves, as Hamlet suggested that the King should be guided to the body of Polonius, that is "by the nose."

Towards the end of the siege of Ladysmith I was attacked by enteric fever, and taken to one of the hospitals; and as I had several relapses, was in hospital both at Ladysmith and at Maritzburg, and was not out of the hands of the doctors and nurses for four and a half months, I am in a position, I think, to contribute some information which I hope will be valuable as regards the hotly debated question of the efficiency or non-efficiency of the hospital administration in Natal.

I wish to say at the very outset that, so far as I was able to see, and considering all

the circumstances of the case, the management of the hospitals was in the highest degree splendid, and that everything was done that could possibly be done to ameliorate the condition of the wounded and the sick.

At Ladysmith, of course, the necessaries which are usually to be found in every hospital were generally conspicuous by their absence, and I can mention one incident which will show more effectually than any language, than any description of mine, the straits to which we were reduced. It seems that there was a considerable supply of ladies' violet face powder somewhere or other in the place, and this was actually boiled down to provide nutriment for the patients in hospital. Besides this there was some champagne and brandy left to the last for the patients, but this, of course, had to be husbanded, and could only be administered in very small quantities, a spoonful now and again, that is, to some of the most serious cases.

The nurses in the hospital in which I was before the siege was raised are deserv-

ing of the highest praise. They were half-starved, overworked, and in some cases ill themselves, and yet they displayed a splendid devotion both day and night. To show how heavily they were overworked, I may mention the simple fact that in some cases we were burying as many as twenty a day. One of the best nurses in the hospital, I remember, whose name I am sorry to say I do not know, got enteric fever, as I heard afterwards, was invalided to Maritzburg, and there succumbed to an illness brought on by her exertions in the cause of the sick and wounded soldiers.

One terrible feature of my own case was that I was constantly brooding over my experiences while I had been a Secret Service Agent in the employ of the Transvaal Government. A report had been spread by a personal enemy of mine that I was a spy in the service of the Boers. A spy receives but short shrift upon the battlefield, and I think it is a proof that I had acted all the way through in a *bona fide* spirit to my own Government that I was able to

satisfy the authorities that whatever I had done in the service of the Transvaal Government had been done with no ultimate intention of harming the British in South Africa. I do not wish to minimize my responsibility, of course, and to make my behaviour appear better than it was, and I frankly admit that my own intention all the way along had been to get as much money out of Paul Kruger and Dr Leyds and Lex Goldman and the Executive Committee as I possibly could. At the same time, always at the back of my mind there was the thought that I might possibly discover some secret or other that would conduce in the end to the actual benefit of my own side, and that this would be to my own benefit when I brought it over. My record as a member of the Australian Brigade in the Johannesburg rising, as a volunteer for the suppression of the Matabele Revolt, and as a man who had fought in five actions under General Sir George White, was sufficient to convince the authorities of my own patriotism and loyalty. Still, the mere fact that I had

been suspected of disloyal motives, although it did not weigh heavily on my mind while I was fighting and in good health, the moment I was laid on my back by enteric fever immediately became a bugbear and a nightmare which militated very considerably against my chances of recovery. I no sooner took a slightly favourable turn for the better, and was able to piece ideas together, than the whole thing began to repeat itself over and over again in my mind. Recollection became with me a purely automatic matter. I could not stop remembering things; they kept going on round and round in my mind like some confounded wheel of a machine. When I came to the end of all my experiences from the day that I landed in South Africa, I immediately went back as though I was forced to do so by some purely mechanical means, and repeated the whole thing over and over again in my mind. The result of this was that I was always flung back again into a state of delirium, and was brought time after time to the verge of death. In enteric fever, I believe,

in spite of the extreme weakness, there is usually very little physical pain, but in some cases fever pains, as they are called, manifest themselves, and, owing to the peculiar nature of my case, I suffered excruciating agony from these. They chiefly manifested themselves in my knees and groins, and the pain was such that I could not lie flat on my back. The only way in which I could dull the agony in my joints was by lying crouched and twisted up in bed, my knees sticking up and raising the bedclothes like a small bell tent round about me. I was told that the condition of my heart was such that they could give me nothing to relieve this agony, and I remember a doctor telling me, in a kind of casual fashion which I resented very much at the time, that it was nothing, the agony I was suffering, and would be sure to disappear in a day or two. I remember, even through my delirium, screaming with pain, and praying to God that I might die, and making such a noise in my agony that the patients to right and left of me could procure no sleep. As a

matter of fact, between the pain I was suffering and the burden on my mind, and the constant state of raving delirium in which I was, I was ultimately removed to a secluded corner of the hospital and specially tended.

At last one night I asked one of the doctors for God's sake to give me something to put me out of my pain, and, obviously thinking that, no matter what the condition of my heart was, a drug would do me less harm than the agony of mind and body which I was suffering, he gave me something which he said would cure me, and a moment afterwards I fell into a profound slumber. I remember still the feeling of darkness that came over my brain as I sank away into what seemed to be an infinite depth of sleep.

After a time I convalesced a little, and was sent down to the hospital at Maritzburg. There I was surrounded with every comfort. I was placed in a large and comfortable ward, and the treatment and the food were both of the most excellent description.

Considerable complaint has been made, I hear, to the effect that the patients in the hospitals of Natal were not supplied with a sufficiency of fresh milk. Now, it is perfectly true that there is great trouble at all times in procuring fresh milk in South Africa, so that any deficiency of that kind that took place in Maritzburg Hospital was not due to the carelessness of the authorities. And even when sufficient milk was not procurable there was always a plentiful supply of condensed milk so long as I was in hospital.

I remember when I began to get slightly better my diet consisted of so much fresh milk *per diem*, so much bread and butter, which was of the most excellent quality, so much beef tea, Brand's Essence, or other nutritious food. After a time, when I was still more convalescent and able to partake of a more generous diet, the following was the food which was provided for me daily, and anybody who runs through the list will see that I, at least, was neither starved nor neglected while in hospital in Natal. I was allowed six eggs

every day, four ounces of brandy, three sodas, champagne if I wanted it, and afterwards, when I was put upon a chicken diet, I was allowed half a boiled chicken, three or four large potatoes, half a pint of chicken broth, a pound of bread, two ounces of butter, and a pint of tea: all these *per diem*. Moreover, there were three or four pots of jam assigned to every ward of eight patients to last them through the week, but as very often in a ward, during a considerable portion of the time that I was there, there were not more than five or six patients at once, we had all as much jam as we could eat, and in some cases, as I think, a good deal more than was good for us.

I forgot to mention that there was a plentiful supply, when we were well enough to take them, of oranges, scones, delicacies and luxuries of all kinds; and the matron, I remember, was constantly distributing flowers through the ward.

Even while I was in the Maritzburg Hospital I heard some of the men complain of the diet and the treatment, but they were not, in most cases I think, men

characterized by any common-sense. Some of them complained of the cooking, although I am sure it was much better than the cooking they had been accustomed to in their own homes, and others complained that they did not get enough to eat, the reason being, of course, that in the particular state of health in which they were, they were not allowed more to eat by the medical authorities. If they had eaten all that they wanted to consume, no doubt many of them would have died. I am perfectly sure that some of these men will return to England and will say that they were badly treated, but I, who was there and saw the actual treatment meted out to them, am perfectly sure it was both wise and liberal.

Enteric fever depends even more upon nursing than upon medical attendance, and I am glad to state here that I consider I owe my life to one nurse in particular who was deputed to look after me.

A great deal is being said, I hear, about the vermin which infested the hospitals both in Ladysmith and Maritzburg, and

a great deal of ignorant comment is being made upon this subject in England. Well, with regard to Ladysmith, you have got to remember that some of us had not had a decent wash for seven weeks on end, and it is perfectly true that in the Ladysmith Hospital there was plenty of lice and bugs. But I consider that this was absolutely inevitable under the circumstances, and perfectly unavoidable in war, and no more than was to be expected from Tommies in the condition in which most of our Tommies were. Owing to the fact that soldiers were constantly coming down from the front to the Maritzburg Hospital, vermin, in many cases, was introduced even there, but, so far as came under my personal observation, they were immediately stamped out, and never obtained any hold in the hospital. The wards were cleaned very particularly by orderlies every morning, and between nine and ten o'clock in the forenoon officers went round to see everything was speckless and spotless. As a matter of fact, I have seen an orderly scolded very

severely for allowing a single cobweb to remain in an obscure corner of the room in which I was lying.

At one time there was some scarcity, I admit, of sheets, blankets, and night-shirts, but so inconsiderable as to be scarcely worth mentioning, and our personal wear was changed as often as it was possible to do so.

The only fault that I find it possible to draw attention to is that the surgeons attached to the R.A.M.C. were in some cases a little perfunctory in their treatment of individual patients. I know of one case where some serious affection of the limbs resulted from enteric fever, and when this was brought before the notice of the Army Doctor, he said in the most casual way: "Oh, yes! that is all right; that will disappear in a day or two." Now, as a matter of fact, it was very far from being all right, and so far from disappearing in a day or two, this particular result of that particular disease will remain to cripple the man for the remainder of his days. At the same time

it must be said in extenuation that a great many silly, nagging complaints were brought by the patients beneath the notice of the surgeons, and in many cases these complaints were quite groundless; so that it is not a matter of surprise if once in a while a doctor pooh-poohed what was a really serious case when it was brought before his notice.

I should like, in conclusion, to mention in particular the name of a certain Captain Durham, as being one of the kindest and most generous men whom it has ever been my good fortune to hear of in connection with an army or a hospital. I am sure that if all the officials in charge in South Africa had displayed the same care and devotion to the comfort and good health of his men as Captain Durham did, there would have been no need for a hospital inquiry.

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